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THE MAN WHO STOPPED AT NOTHING

By PAUL W. FAIRMAN

VALIGURSKY

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Published monthly by ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY at 185 North Wabash Ave., Chicago 1, Ill. Editorial—New York Office, 366 Madison Ave., New York 17, N. Y. Copyright under International Copyright Convention. Entered as second class matter June 3, 1947 at the Post Office, Chicago, Illinois under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional second class, entry, Holyoke, Massachusetts. Subscription: in U. S. Canada, Mexico, South and Central America, and U. S. Possessions $2.50 for 12 issues, all other foreign countries, $3.50 for 12 issues. Subscribers should allow at least two weeks for change of address. All communications about subscriptions should be addressed to the Director of Circulation, Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 185 North Wabash Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.

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VOLUME 13 NUMBER 11

All Stories Complete

THE MAN WHO STOPPED AT NOTHING (Novel—25,000) . . . by Paul W. Fairman 8

Illustrated by Leo Ramon Summers and Ralph Castenir

Two worlds were struggling grimly for possession of his limp body. But Dorn didn't mind. His soul was too occupied enjoying the luscious nude picking her wardrobe in Swank's store window

ANYTHING YOUR HEART DESIRES (Short—4,600) . . . . . by Stephen Marlowe. 50

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It was only a triangular vault in a long-dead Martian city. But to the three Earthmen it meant refuge—and the fulfillment of all their desires. All their desires?

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Illustrated by Frank Navarro

Up on this planet, beauty parlors would surely go broke. Why spend hours sitting under a dryer when a wig serves your purpose so much better—and eliminates the telephone besides?

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Everybody has troubles. But Jeremiah Perkins had more than most people. For if the sun didn't shine when he wasn't looking, how did he know it was dark when he couldn't see?

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED (Short-short—2,900) . . . . . by Wallace Umphrey 86

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So you're sure you see an armada of armed space ships heading toward Earth? Better report it to Thor Mariten, the ace news reporter. He'll know what the ships are . . . .

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When Don found out he could remember tomorrow, he set out to change yesterday. Only to find that it was the day after tomorrow he really had to worry about

Front cover painting by Ed Valigursky, from a scene in "The Man Who Stopped At Nothing"

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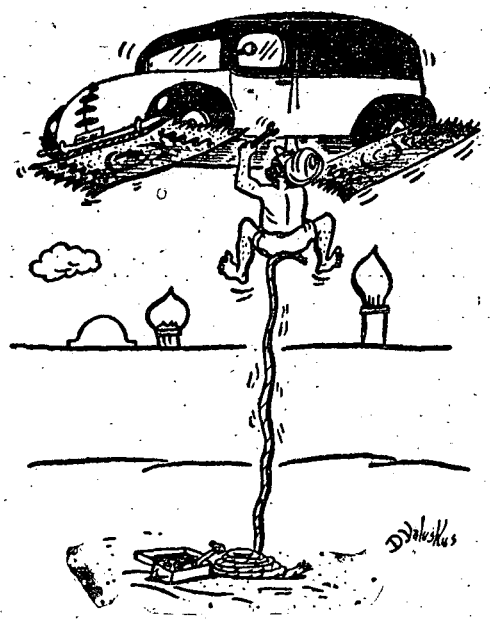
The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

THERE HAS always been a lot of technical information available on the fundamentals of interplanetary flight. From Oberth's "W-e g e zur. Raumschiffahrt" ("Ways to Spaceship Travel") to the present-day articles by Ley, Richardson, and others, the principles of rocket flight and astrogation have been clearly explained.

BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, until now there hasn't been a single book available for the English-speaking reader which would collect and summarize the elementary principles of coming space travel, without becoming much too mathematical and complicated.

NOW, HOWEVER, Arthur Clark, the English writer, has remedied this with an excellent book titled "Interplanetary Flight". The book opens with a consideration of the gravitational field which chains us to Earth, and then it proceeds through fundamental rocketry, through space-stations, to Lunar and Martian and Venusian flight.



IT RELEGATES most of the mathematics—without which any discussion of rocketry bears little relation to reality—to the appendix where it won't distract the casual reader who wants a general over-all picture. The book is straight science, with hardly any interpolation except the assumption that a suitable fuel will be available eventually.

EVERY ONCE in a while, dyed-in-the-wool science-fiction readers should take stock of their attitudes—to see how they stand realistically—in order to appreciate the magnitude of the problem still confronting us. It's all very well to be familiar with journeys to the planets—to travel out into interstellar space to the galaxies. But the fact remains that we haven't yet left Earth.

IT'S TIME to take another look at the problem. This book is perfect for that purpose, and in its way is even more thrilling—suggestive as it is of a soon-to-be reality—than many more imaginative studies.

ABOUT EIGHT months ago—shortly after our editorial offices moved to New York—a good-looking shy young man, carrying a portfolio of illustrations under his arm, came in to see us. He was still going to art school, had never sold anything. But would we please look at his work and evaluate it?

WE WOULD—and did. And found a fine artist. He became a familiar figure in our offices. Art Editor Leo Summers, always on the lookout for new talent, took Hugh under his wing and taught him many of the tricks of the drawing board—and in the ensuing months Hugh illustrated a number of our stories, his last one for "Remember Not To Die" (page 94, this issue).

IT IS OUR sad task to inform our readers of Hugh's death in an automobile crash last week. We want to extend our sympathies to his family in their bereavement. Hugh's tragic death is a great loss, not only to his family and friends, but to the world of art as well. ..... LES

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Sing The Man A Song....

By Frederic Booth

PRIMITIVE MAN learned that he could not reproduce all the sounds of Nature with his vocal organs, and that there were other ways of imitating these sounds. In prehistoric times, he made his living largely by the use of bow and arrow. He learned that he could strike a more telling blow, at a farther and safer distance, with a flint-tipped arrow propelled by the quickly released tension of a bow, than he could with his hands or with a club. His bow was bent with a string made from the hide or tendon of some animal that he had killed. When the bow string was released, there was a twang, and a vibrating humming noise.

He made use of all parts of the animals that he killed. Their skins were dried and tanned and used for shelter or for clothing. They were stretched over hollow logs, sea shells, or other hollow objects, so that the air might reach both sides in the tanning process. When the dried skin, stretched tightly over some hollow object, was struck with a stick or stone, it produced an echoing sound, a sound of percussion.

He also made use of the horns and large bones of the beasts he killed. They were used as household implements, as spoons, drinking cups. When air from his lungs was blown through these hollow horns, it produced a bleating sonorous sound that would carry far and could be heard at a greater distance than that of the human voice.

The beating of the dried skin stretched over some hollow object was the principle of the drum. The twanging of the bow string was the principle of the stringed instrument. And the blowing through the hollow horn was the principle of the wind instrument. No other basic principles are involved in the entire scope of musical instruments. With the discovery of three methods of producing sound vibration, the foundation for the entire universe of music was completed.

You can examine any stringed instrument of today, and you will find that it is only an evoluted form of the vibration of the bow-string. When primitive man discovered that there was the harmony of sound in his bowstring, it is only reasonable to suppose that he tied on another string and then another; that he bent the bow still more and added other strings until he produced the harp, as we deduce from the early drawings of the harp.

The wind instruments of today are evoluted forms of the first primitive horn used by primitive man which he had taken from some beast. The principle of blowing through a horn or hollow tube to produce sound has not changed, but the forms have changed a thousand times.

The drum is the simplest of all instruments, and the oldest. Every savage tribe on earth makes use of the drum in religious or social rites. In "History of Music", Rowbotham says: "Never in the musical history of mankind is the lyre stage found to precede the pipe stage, nor the pipe stage to precede the drum stage. That this should be the order of development seems natural if we consider the mechanical complexity of the instruments themselves. The drum is evidently the simplest of all; the pipe is more complex than the drum; but the lyre, which consists of strings bound around pegs and strung on a frame, is the most complex of all." It is therefore conclusive that the drum is the least evoluted of all instruments and that, with a few changes, it represents the dried skin stretched over some hollow object as prehistoric man first made use of it.

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It was after Dorn was killed that he really began to enjoy living

THE MAN WHO STOPPED

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Dorn did a double-take. How could this girl be calmly undressing in a store window?

AT NOTHING

By Paul W. Fairman

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THE THOUGHT pattern during the split second before impact was of academic interest to Dorn. He had never imagined so much could go through the human brain in so short a time.

First there was the certainty that nothing could be done. The approaching car—hurtling through the night—was dead ahead on the narrow road; an invisible demon with two flaming, seal-beam eyes. The knowledge that he could do nothing whatever to save his own life came, strangely enough, as somewhat of a relief to Dorn. At least, he thought, I won't have to make a decision and then regret having been wrong.

After making this observation he thought next, with satisfaction, of how he had paid up his life insurance only a week previously. That was good. Vicky should be able to clear things up with the forty thousand dollars she would have to play with. Pat and Laura would be out of high school next year, and then maybe Vicky would go back to her old job at the radio station. It would still be open, of course. And Felix could get another job.

His family properly disposed of, Dorn allowed himself the luxury of a few personal thoughts while the two headlights bearing down upon him grew brighter, like the eyes of a beast leaping at its prey.

All in all, he'd had a good life. He'd married young and was now thirty-five—or was it thirty-six?—and would leave society two fine children and a raven-haired wife who would make a very attractive widow. No doubt some discerning male would snap Vicky up at the first opportunity; if not for her looks, which were still mighty potent, then at least for the respectable chunk of money she could bring along.

Now, with the crash imminent, Dorn became the victim of certain natural regrets. He admitted he wasn't ready to die and it was all so unnecessary. Traveling a deserted country road at this speed was damn foolishness. Just because he'd lost his way and was a few minutes off schedule, he hadn't been justified in risking his neck.

But then, he thought petulantly, what about the other guy? A congenital idiot beyond all doubt. Who but a fool would come around a corner on a dark night at such insane speed? At least he himself was on a straightaway and not doing much more than sixty. And he did have an appointment. Well—maybe not exactly an appointment, but at least a place to go.

That other goon was out joy-riding, no doubt. Just think of it! A lame-brain out on a country road doing seventy just for the hell of it!

The laws weren't strict enough. That was the trouble. Half the drivers in this country should have their licenses pulled. That and that alone would make the roads safe for decent drivers. Solid citizens who raised families, provided for them and had a right to a few days' relaxation in the mountains.

It was a hell of a note when—

CRASH!!

PROFESSOR JAN LIMPUS loved loneliness—enjoyed darkness—was enamored of melancholy places and thin sickle-moons that threw dim eerie light. He hated people, crowded communities, and critics; critics most of all. And because he'd never met a human being who did not criticize him and his viewpoints, it could be safely said that he hated everybody.

Criticism of the professor through the years had been varied and sometimes long-winded. But short observations had been dropped now and again that neatly summed up the bulk of

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public and private complaint against the thin, wild-eyed, leather-faced Limpus.

Statements such as: "You're strictly for the birds, Prof."

"I've met dopes and dopes, but speaking of dopes..."

"Why don't they lock you up?"

"I saw a grade-B movie once with a screw-ball doctor in it. And you know something? You could have played the part a lot better."

By an odd coincidence, this last observation had filled Jan Limpus with pride. It so happened he'd seen the same horror picture and had, thenceforth, used the mad doctor as his model. He'd worked hard to become the real-life prototype of the insane experimenter who had died in a convenient fire at the end of the picture.

Of course, Jan Limpus would have had little trouble in making the role more convincing than had the Hollywood actor, because Jan was mad as a hatter to begin with and that helped a great deal.

He'd gone into the hills with his dangerous ideas and his equipment and he fared forth from his lonely domicile only on the darkest nights. Lack of illumination did not inconvenience him one whit because he had eyes like a cat.

On this particular night he was roaming the wild, wooded country where he dwelt undisturbed, and was thus the only person on earth in a position to hear the sounds resulting from the crash of an automobile on the road below.

He hurried down to investigate and soon came upon the scene of the accident. Demented as he was, it seemed insane to Limpus that anyone would travel that road at a speed beyond fifteen miles an hour.

But someone had done just that, because the front end of the car looked as though it had been put through a stampmill. This did not interest Limpus too greatly, however. He was more engrossed with other possibilities and dug eagerly into the dark tonneau of the car.

There was a body slumped over on the front seat. Limpus grinned like a vampire and went about the business of getting it out.

Nor was he at all surprised over the affair. After all, he'd dutifully stuck to the script by coming up into these wild hills. It followed as night the day that fate would hand him a body to work on. That's how it was done in Hollywood, and Limpus knew those boys out there were realists.

Wasn't all the world, in truth, a stage? Weren't the people merely players?

Wasn't he entitled to a body?

He hauled the corpse from the car and got it over his shoulder. He staggered happily into the woods toward home.

DORN WALKED along a crowded street at high noon in a city of two million souls. He knew the street and the city and what time it was, but he knew little else. He did know, but vaguely, that something was wrong, something he felt to be vital. But he had not the mental energy to delve into it. He was saturated, somehow, with a gentle melancholy—a retrospective sadness entirely new to him.

Also, he was mildly annoyed by the rudeness of the public. Never before had he had to get out of so many people's way. It was shocking, the manner in which they barged blindly ahead as though each of them individually owned the sidewalk and he himself was of some unwashed clan who should walk in the gutter.

Yet he could only be hurt by this treatment, not angered. His mental

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lethargy, it seemed, blanketed all but the mildest of emotions.

But only up to a certain point. Squarely in the middle of the next block, he was jarred back into some semblance of normalcy. This by one of those things that just couldn't happen. An occurrence calculated to peel the hide off a steel elephant.

The scene was a shop window in which stood several mannequins, clad in various stages of feminine undress. The most scantily clad dummy wore stockings, a bra, a garter belt, and a pair of transparent lace panties with a black patch in an obvious place. The whole aspect, to Dorn, was one of positive indecency. A second mannequin was clad in a pink slip and the pattern went up the line to the last one, draped in a smart sport suit consisting of coat and skirt.

The window was no doubt meant to contain a complete display of feminine apparel from the skin out, and it certainly did just that. But Dorn would not have given it a second glance except for the girl who stood there in plain sight taking off her dress.

Dorn caught sight of her just as she'd reached down, caught the edge of her skirt, and had started pulling the dress off over her head. His jaw dropped to his necktie. His eyes bulged, and he had just time to duck in next to a protecting stone pillar beside the window in order to keep from being knocked down by passing traffic.

The girl was a honey-blonde and certainly did not look to be the promiscuous type. She looked exactly like the dozens of decent, attractive, desirable girls who meet boys, get married, and raise families.

Yet she now stood nonchalantly in a store window on a public street at high noon taking off her dress. Underneath was revealed a pair of pink panties—not transparent—a pink bra, and nylons over a pair of legs that could get her married in nothing flat to any unattached male within marriageable distance.

A publicity stunt, Dorn thought. After all, the girl still had on more covering than the mannequin most representative of Eve. Gad! What they wouldn't do to sell merchandise!

He noted, in passing, that the crowd hadn't spotted the girl yet. People continued to hurry by without the least idea of what they were missing.

BUT HE noted this only in passing. All his attention was riveted upon the girl in the window. She stood for a moment thoughtfully surveying the various garments on display. She seemed to be endeavoring to make up her mind.

Decision having been arrived at, she forced Dorn's jaw even lower upon his chest by calmly stripping off her bra and panties.

"Don't look," Dorn's conscience said.

"What do you mean—don't look?" replied the beast in him.

"This is wrong—sinful," Conscience stated.

"So are wars, pestilence and famine," Beast answered. "Stop bothering me."

The girl moved, slim and beautiful as a summer dream, to the mannequin wearing the scandalous scanties. These she stripped off and appropriated after the natural manner. Next, she critically examined the material in the pink slip; she appropriated that garment also.

Now, Dorn's attention was drawn forcibly from the casual pillage going on in the window; drawn by something even more amazing.

No one on the street was paying any attention to the girl.

From two directions, unnumbered human beings streamed by along the

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broad sidewalk. But they appeared completely blind so far as the sensational activity in the window was concerned.

I've lost my mind, Dorn thought. That's the only answer. I've stepped beyond the boundaries of reason; barged right into the pages of *Alice In Wonderland*.

But that, he remembered, was a children's story. Possibly this was an advanced Alice—an Alice for adults. He realized then, quite suddenly, that the girl was watching him.

She had just stripped the sport suit from the completely dressed mannequin—had been holding the skirt up for inspection. But her eyes turned his way—he saw they were clear blue—and they widened in apparent recognition. This brought added surprise. He had never before seen the girl. Not that he wouldn't have welcomed an introduction, but the fact remained he didn't know her. This did not keep her from speaking to him.

"Oh, you startled me! I didn't see you there." A quick smile. "You should blow a horn or something."

Dorn was in such a state as to completely overlook the strangeness of his being able to hear her quite clearly through the heavy plate glass. There was no thought behind his reply.

"I was walking along. I. . . saw you. I was. . . naturally interested. It. . . well. . . it isn't very often a person sees a girl. . . another person strip. . . changing. . ." He fell silent.

With a quick, warm smile, the girl stepped into the skirt, adjusted it, and took the jacket off the dummy. A moment later, completely dressed, she moved toward Dorn.

SHE WALKED straight through the glass window out into the street. She came close to Dorn, smiled up at him and placed her hands upon his shoulders. There was something motherly in her gaze.

This madness—this nightmare—was too much for Dorn. He passed lax fingers through his rumpled hair and stared blankly into the girl's face.

Her pity was obvious now, and her manner, under other circumstances, might have been described as deliciously intimate. She stood close to him and straightened his necktie with frank tenderness. She said, "You poor, poor darling!"

A wave of weakness passed through Dorn, weakness settling mainly in the region of his knees. He sought words, could find none, and returned the girl's smile.

"You just don't understand do you?" she crooned.

Dorn shook his head. "That's certainly right out of the testament. I don't understand any of this."

"You just—arrived?" The question was asked with delicacy.

"I—I don't know. I guess maybe."

"Never mind. You come with me. We'll find a cafeteria and get you a cup of hot coffee."

"A cafeteria?"

There was a lull in passing traffic and the girl took his arm to lead him around the nearest corner and down a flight of steps. "Yes," she said. "We have cafeterias. That is—it's better because no one will serve us in regular restaurants."

That seemed as logical to Dorn as everything else, mainly because it continued the thread of complete idiocy.

"Why won't they serve us? Are we lepers or something?"

"Of course not. You'll understand in time. I remember when I first came. A fat man walked into me. I almost fainted when I went right through him."

"Went right through—"

"Here's a table. You sit down. I'll fill a tray and come right back."

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Dorn dropped into a chair and watched the girl trip lightly to the gate giving entrance into the aisle along the food counters. So sated was he with the incongruous and impossible, that only a slight shock ran through him as he saw her walk straight *through* a woman dallying by the salad counter and stand completely submerged in the body of a tall, heavy-set man while she put two cups of coffee on the tray.

DORN BLINKED to clear his eyes of the faint mist surrounding her as she stepped again into unoccupied space. The mist—the vague, glowing halo—refused to vanish. Again he blinked. No result.

He turned his eyes upon the man putting a plate of roast beef on his tray. No halo there. A clear, perfectly defined outline.

Obviously the halo was attached to Dorn's new-found friend and the truth—the horrible truth—began to dawn on him. But he refused to recognize it as such. He pressed a hand hard over his eyes and told himself: I'm dreaming. It's a wild hideous nightmare I'm in; a bad dream caused by raiding the ice box before bed-time.

But this gave him scant comfort because never in his life had he raided the ice box at bed-time.

The girl had returned now and was placing the tray, loaded to overflowing, on the table. She smiled warmly at Dorn.

"I don't think you told me your name," Dorn said.

"Sally. Sally Williams. And yours?"

"Dorn Lattimore, but—"

Sally was putting things on the table. She said, "I've eaten here before. The food is very good. Dig right in and enjoy it."

"I'm not very hungry, really."

"Then drink the coffee. It will give you strength."

Dorn felt he must have presented a rather pathetic spectacle as he stirred the coffee. To offset this, he tried to smile, but it didn't quite come off.

Sally, seated opposite him, reached across the table to squeeze his hand reassuringly. "Perhaps you'd like to ask me some questions. I'll try to help you over the rough spots."

"You're very good, very kind. Tell me—are we invisible? Can't anyone see us sitting here?"

"We're invisible to all but our own kind."

"Our own kind?"

"Those on the same plane with us."

"All right—let me have it straight. Are we dead?"

"No, we aren't dead. We've only passed beyond the veil."

"Well, isn't that—"

"Death? No." Sally shook her head and Dorn watched the lights dance off her honey-blonde curls. "It's merely what those down there think death to be." She indicated the other diners and pushed a fork into her cottage cheese salad.

"What do you mean 'down there'? They aren't lying on the floor."

Sally flashed white teeth and answered with a small mouthful of salad. "You'll get used to the terms after a while. We always refer to them as being 'down' because they are on a lower plane than we are. They are composed of lower rates of vibration. That's why we can see them while they can't see us—or touch us. That's why we can walk right through them."

DORN HAD so many unanswered questions flailing around in his mind he scarcely knew which one to ask first. While he was fishing for one, Sally laid down her fork and focused her eyes intently into his.

"I want you to think very carefully," she said. "Take your time and try

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to remember. Look into your immediate past. Where did you come from? What happened?"

"It's—it's all so vague. As though I'm in the middle of a dream."

"It will be for a while, but that will pass. Now think! What happened to you? Make an effort."

Dorn clasped a hand over his forehead and closed his eyes. "I remember it was night. Late. There were a pair of headlights."

"An auto? You were in a car and there was an accident? Were you driving?"

"Yes—yes. I was alone. This damn fool in the other car was doing seventy."

Sally frowned and tapped a red nail against white teeth. "That's strange. Are you sure there was another car?"

"Of course I'm sure. It's coming back now."

"The other driver must have survived, then."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because if he too had passed beyond the veil, you'd be with him. Those who've just come always cling together for a while. Sometimes you'll be walking along and meet forty or fifty released souls in a group. Then you can be sure there's been a train wreck or a disaster. They say in China after the floods and famines, whole armies of people move about together."

Dorn glanced around nervously. "You're sure no one can see us? What about the food you brought? The tray? Can't they see the dishes on the table?"

"No. You see when I picked up the tray it still remained where it was so far as those down there are concerned. I lifted only a high rate of vibration from the metal. The vibration of course forms a complete tray, just as the salad and the coffee I took are complete in themselves, but the lower rate those down there see and eat remains untouched."

"I suppose I should know what you're talking about, but I don't."

"You'll understand it eventually," Sally said easily. "After all, you're in pretty much the same position as a baby born down there. It doesn't learn to walk overnight."

"I suppose not. But about this not being dead—this passing through the veil. I don't get that at all. I always thought that when you got killed you were dead."

"Did you ever hear of limbo, purgatory?"

"Of course."

"Well, that might help to explain it—that is, as nearly as it can be explained."

"You mean the thousands—the millions—the billions of people who have died—"

"Not died."

"Then who have passed beyond the veil come into this state of existence?"

"Where else could they come?"

"Then why isn't this plane of yours—"

She smiled. "Ours."

"—of ours, then, crowded to the cattle guards? I can't see how there'd even be room to stand around."

"After a while," Sally said gravely, "we die."

"We do? How soon?"

"THERE isn't any fixed rule. In the lower plane, a baby can pass beyond the veil at birth. Or a man can live for a hundred years. Here the time seems to be much shorter. I'm four now and considered to be getting on in years."

"You mean you...passed beyond the veil four years ago?"

"That's right."

"An accident?"

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"I was drowned at Coney Island."

"I'm sorry."

"That's another thing you'll have to get over. You wouldn't have sympathized with a child for being born, would you?"

"Not to change the subject, but suppose somebody comes over and sits down at this table. We'd have to get up in a hurry, wouldn't we?"

"No. Let them sit down if they want to."

"But—but we're using the chairs."

"Not the part they'd use. Don't worry about it."

"One more thing—while you were in that window . . ."

Sally ate her cottage cheese with relish. She laid down her fork and said, "I imagine you thought I was a thief."

"That isn't what I was going to bring up. I'm wondering how you knew I had passed the veil. You look the same as everyone else to me."

"Almost, but not quite. The higher vibration gives off a certain radiance. It's faint but discernable."

"I've noticed it. I wondered what it was. And may I say it's very becoming on you?"

Sally got up from the table. "Thank you. And now I think you should get some rest. You look tired."

"I am tired. Where can we go?"

"To a hotel, of course."

"Together?"

"Certainly. Does that surprise you?"

"Well—"

"It won't after you've existed here for a while. You will develop an entire new code of morals and ethics."

"I'll be very receptive."

Sally paused for a moment, then sat down. "Maybe I can help you a little in that respect. You see, the lower moral code does not exist in this plane. There is no need of it. We are not in a productive vibration. The method of entrance is not through sexual reproduction, so the male and female mean nothing at all."

This Dorn doubted. "You're not kidding me?"

"No."

"O. K. But when I saw you in that window with nothing . . . without anything—well, when I saw you standing there my reactions were strictly from the lower vibrations."

"That was different. You'd just been born, so to speak. The instincts of your former life were still functioning. But you will lose them very quickly. They are fading out of you even now."

"You could be wrong about that."

"I don't think I am."

"Then we go to a hotel together and get some sleep?"

"I think it would be a good idea."

A SUDDEN thought came to Dorn. "And we can go anywhere we want to? We can pick a fifty-dollar-a-day suite in the best hotel?"

She shrugged. "If we choose. But surroundings will become less and less important to you as time goes on. A comfortable bed is the main thing."

"One bed?"

"Two if you wish. I twist around a lot in my sleep."

"I—I think that would be best until my old instincts die. And maybe you would humor me on another point. Let's go to the Belford Plaza and move into the penthouse. I want to savor my taste for extravagance before it fades out."

"Very well."

Sally got up and walked toward the exit. Dorn followed her. The door was closed. Sally turned and said, "You might as well start learning things right now. This door, for instance. You can't open it the way you used to open doors. The vibrations on the lower plane won't respond in any way

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to your efforts."

"Then how do we get out of here?"

"The lower vibration won't hold you back. You just walk through it."

"You mean, just—"

"That's it. Walk into the thing as though it didn't exist. So far as you're concerned, it doesn't. Try it."

"All right. Here goes."

Dorn stepped resolutely toward the wood and glass barrier. When it was an inch from his nose, he closed his eyes and flinched. But there was nothing—nothing at all. He opened his eyes and Sally was saying,

"Good—excellent. See how easy it is?"

Dorn took a deep breath of higher-plane air. "I feel wonderful. Why, it's as though I'd just begun to live!"

"I felt the same way," Sally replied. "Now, walk directly up the street and don't step aside for anyone."

The effect of walking through people was exhilarating to say the least, and Dorn felt a sudden pity for all the people down there who went about in a cloud so to speak, not having the least idea of what was really going on in the world.

Engrossed as he was in all this newness, like a child with a new toy, a sudden thought struck him. "Look here, we can walk through doors and through people. Yet the sidewalk holds us up. How come we don't sink right through it?"

"You'll be able to with some practice," Sally replied with what he thought was almost a tender look. "But as they tell children down there, learn to walk before you start running."

DORN LOOKED closely at his beautiful new friend and he wondered the while if her old instincts were entirely dead.

They found two unoccupied apartments in the Belford Plaza penthouse and chose the more elaborate one. Sally, interested in only the important things, was entirely unimpressed by the lavish surroundings as she tested the springs of one of the twin beds.

"This will do nicely," she said.

She bent forward in an unmistakable movement Dorn had seen before—toward the hem of her skirt.

Dorn said, "Wait." There was a pleading note in his voice.

Sally straightened, a questioning look on her face.

"Wait until I get out—go through the wall—please."

"Why? Where are you going?"

"Into the other bedroom. I'll sleep there. I'm not as confident as you are about these dying instincts. A man can stand just so much.

She smiled at him with that strange tenderness. "Sleep in there if you wish, but it's not necessary. Remember, you aren't a man any more in that sense. You've risen above lower things."

"Don't put any money on it. I've got a hunch my instincts die hard."

Halfway through the wall he turned and asked, "Do you wear a nightgown or sleep raw?"

"I never wear a nightgown."

"Then at least keep a sheet over you in case I want to come in and ask some more questions."

"Very well. I'll humor you."

"Another thing, would you object to an experiment?"

"Certainly not. What do you have in mind?"

Dorn walked back to the bed. Very gently, but firmly, he took Sally into his arms. He raised her chin and planted his lips very firmly upon hers. They were warm and very nice. After a long moment he drew back.

Sally's eyes were bright with interest. "What did that prove?"

Dorn sighed. "It's no use explain-

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ing. Here beyond the veil I probably couldn't make you understand." He went through the wall into the next room.

AT EXACTLY four minutes after nine o'clock that night, two apparently unrelated incidents sent three people, in two planes of existence, off on three courses of action.

Deep in the northern woods, the mad Jan Limpus crouched over a body in his laboratory. The body, pallid but undamaged, lay on a table surrounded by as weird a collection of gadgets as ever graced the set of a Hollywood horror movie. Dynamos hummed. Arcs of blue flame leaped across gaps from one electrode to another. Strange solutions boiled endlessly in crytal goblets; and, to make the scene perfect, a howling rainstorm lashed through the trees outside.

In this setting, Jan Limpus pushed a button on an electric instrument and the body on the table jerked suddenly and trembled.

At that exact instant, Dorn Lattimore, having grown restless on his soft bed in the Bedford Plaza penthouse, and having arisen to practice his new art of walking through solid objects, was halfway through the foot-thick wall enclosing his bedroom.

Halfway through—and he found, to his horror, that he could go no further. He found, also, other interesting things.

He had pushed, head and shoulders, into a magnificent mauve-tiled bathroom, a bathroom which was being used by a girl who had evidently felt the need of a shower. The young lady was wearing what most people wear in a shower—nothing.

Soaping herself luxuriously, she had turned and beheld half a man sticking in through the wall; a man who was struggling to get further in and was having no success.

The girl dropped her soap and froze motionless under the steaming spray. Her mouth opened and closed, opened and closed, for all the world like a fish flung upon the shore. By dint of titanic effort, she made connections with her reflexes. There resulted a scream calculated to awaken people for blocks around.

At that moment, a few seconds later than four minutes after nine, the body on Jan Limpus' table stopped trembling and stiffened again into immobility. Also, the bathroom door in the Belford penthouse was flung open by a man in crimson pajamas, whereupon the girl fell out of the shower into his arms.

The man asked, "What in the hell is going on in here?"

The girl had all the appearances of a goggle-eyed idiot with no clothes on. She pointed at the wall and screamed again.

Her rescuer demanded, "What's wrong with you? Baby, what's the matter?"

"A ma—ma-ma—ma-man!"

"What do you mean—a man? There's nobody in here."

The girl pointed. "Stick-sticking out through the wall. Half of him!"

"Baby! Snap out of it!"

"A man. I saw him! Trying to come through the wall."

The girl's husband was thoroughly frightened. He'd heard of people going stark raving crazy at the drop of a hat, but he'd never seen it before. He propped his wife against the wash-bowl and went over and rubbed his hand over the smooth, shining wall.

"It's all right, baby. All right! There's nothing there. Only the wall. Come on. I'll get you to bed and call a doctor."

The affair cost him four thousand dollars for a top-notch psychiatrist who could find nothing wrong with the

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girl, but who mailed a bill anyhow.

ALSO, THE affair sent the highly elated Jan Limpus off on an entirely new line of frenzied research.

And it sent Dorn Lattimore in panic to the bedside of Sally Williams.

Sally opened her eyes and sat up. The sheet dropped to her midriff and Dorn's stubborn instincts caused him to jerk it back up and wind it firmly about her shapely shoulders.

"I—I got stuck."

"What are you talking about?"

"I couldn't sleep. I was practicing this going-through-things business. I got stuck in a wall."

Sally smiled. "You're exactly like a baby down there. After taking its first step there's no stopping it. But about being stuck in a wall—you're joking, of course."

"I'm not joking. Halfway through I couldn't come back or go ahead. It was like being locked in a vise. There was a girl in the room and she saw me. She let out a yell like a banshee with an ear ache. That brought her husband, but by that time I'd gotten loose and faded out so he couldn't see me."

Sally regarded him in silence for a few moments. A frown creased her smooth forehead. "You're sure this really happened—that you didn't imagine it?"

"I tell you that's how it was."

"Impossible."

"What do you mean, impossible?"

"It just couldn't happen. It's like someone down there claiming he could hang in midair with no support. Just impossible."

"Are there such things as hallucinations on this higher plane?"

"I never heard of any. But you'd better sleep in here." Sally pointed to the unoccupied bed. "Lie down there so I can keep an eye on you."

Dorn was too disturbed to protest. He dropped down and stretched out wearily on the bed.

"That's fine," Sally observed in a soothing voice. "Close your eyes now and go to sleep."

Dorn closed his eyes, but he didn't go to sleep. He watched the even rise and fall of Sally's high breasts—took in the curves of her body from her toes to the saucy tilt of her nose.

There was something mighty disturbing in all this. Take the matter of his instincts; the ones that were supposed to die. If they'd perished, new and stronger ones seemed to have arisen to take their places.

He thought of Vicky; of Pat and Laura. A sudden sense of loneliness swept over him. A feeling of helpless emptiness, of pure fright.

There was something mighty cockeyed about this deal.

Mighty cockeyed.

Dorn turned over and resolutely demanded sleep.

HE AWOKE next morning with no sense of having been born again, but rather in a mood akin to a rainy, dismal day even though the sun was shining outside. His first thought was of Vicky. Then his mind switched quickly to Sally and he glanced over to see an empty bed next to his.

Now the sound of a shower came to him and Sally called from the bathroom: "Are you awake?"

Dorn informed her that he was.

"Then come on in. The water's just right."

"I'd better wait until you're through."

"Why?"

"It might be kind of crowded, for one thing."

"All right. I'll be through in a few minutes."

A short time later they rode down from the penthouse with an elevator boy who thought he was entirely alone.

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They had breakfast in the cafeteria.

Over coffee, Sally grew pensive. "Do you know what I woke up thinking about?"

"No."

"My funeral."

"Your funeral. I was feeling pretty low myself, but—"

"Oh, I wasn't depressed. I was very happy. It was a beautiful ceremony. My family crying. All the flowers. There were forty-two cars in the procession. I counted them. I was very popular. Then, going at the height of my girlhood so to speak—"

"Stop it! I'm in no mood for sadism. I suppose watching your mother's grief made you very happy."

"Why not? It proved she loved me."

"I'm afraid I've got a lot to learn about life on this plane."

"It will take a little time. By the way, you'll probably be buried this afternoon. You'll want to attend, of course."

"Go to my own funeral? Good God!"

"But everyone does."

"Everyone but Dorn Lattimore. I've no desire to see Vicky and the children weeping."

"Vicky was your wife?"

"Yes, and I'm beginning to miss her like the very devil."

Sally leaned forward and looked with genuine concern into Dorn's face. "I'm worried about you. I can't understand it. You shouldn't have any feeling whatever for your wife. And you should look forward to attending your own funeral. Your reactions are—are completely abnormal."

"On the contrary. I seem to be the only normal individual on this whole abnormal plane. You said my instincts would die out. Well, they haven't. This morning I had a very healthy and wholesome urge to go into the bathroom and get a long, undisturbed look at your legs. The only reason I didn't was that I'm a gentleman. And I don't want to go to my own funeral."

SALLY'S CONCERN deepened. "You wanted to look at my legs?"

"Yes. And I don't see anything abnormal about it. And if you want to know what I was thinking, this is it: I was cursing my luck. I lived for thirty-five years among people who appreciated the importance of sex; who were alive to its possibilities. And the only time I get into a hotel room with a beautiful girl is after I'm dead. It's like inheriting a pair of binoculars after you've gone blind."

"Dead? But you're not dead."

"All right—after I've passed through the veil. Quit being so technical." Dorn glanced toward the food counter. He said. "Those two women. They're coming this way. I think—they're going to sit down at this table."

"That's nothing to worry about. Let them sit down. You might as well get used to people occupying the lower vibrations of your chair."

The two women approached with well-filled trays and set them on the table. Dorn, with a feeling of definite resentment, felt his chair slide on the marble floor. A hell of a plane where you had to occupy space with a fat woman at breakfast. The woman lowered her weight into the chair.

But she got so far down and no further. Dorn felt the bulk of her hundred and fifty pounds settle into his lap. He grunted indignantly and the woman came up out of the chair as though propelled by a hatpin.

She whirled in her tracks—surprisingly quick for one of her size. A look of blank consternation came into her face as she stared down at Dorn. Her words were a disjointed babble.

"I'm— Oh, I'm so sorry! I didn't know— I mean, I didn't see anyone. I—"

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Then her eyes widened and her face lost all its color. With a wild swing of her head, she turned to her astonished companion.

"A man!" she bleated. "There was a man in that chair. I didn't see him and I sat on him. Then I saw him and now I don't see him any more!" The woman fainted and went to the floor.

"Let's get out of here," Sally ordered. "We need a breathing spell. There's a lot going on I don't understand."

They pulled up, finally, in a secluded corner of a hotel lobby where they found two chairs. They sat down wearily.

"I don't care what you say about people occupying the same chair," Dorn said. "If someone comes over here to sit down, I'm getting up. That dame almost squashed me."

SALLY WAS regarding him with a strange expression. It was as though she expected him to be transformed into something else at any moment. "We've got to have a serious talk," she said. "Something is vitally wrong here."

"You're telling me."

"Your reactions are all messed up, for one thing. You want to look at my legs. You don't want to go to your own funeral. You miss your wife. You're all twisted up, Mr. Lattimore."

"I'm sorry. Are there any psychiatrists on this plane?"

Sally ignored that. "And you keep reappearing in the lower plane. Something that's impossible."

"It isn't impossible. I did it twice."

"When you told me about getting stuck in the wall last night, I put it down to nerves. But I must have been wrong."

"You've no idea how wrong. I'll never forget that girl's scream."

"And that woman saw you in the cafeteria. I was watching and your aura vanished. You actually materialized on the lower plane."

"Then quit saying it's impossible."

There was a time of silence while Sally sat deep in thought and Dorn bit his fingernails. Sally's eyes remained glued to his face as though she strove to pierce his hide and discover what was wrong with him. Finally she came to a decision.

"I think we'd better go to your funeral," she said. "You've got to be forced into doing normal things or the morbid streak in you will grow stronger."

"But I don't want to go to my funeral."

"Did you feel the same way about your wedding?"

"Of course not."

"It's practically the same thing."

"I'm afraid I can't see the similarity."

"But you're on a higher plane now."

Dorn groaned. "Okay. If you put it that way, we'll go to my funeral."

"You'll see Vicky, your wife," Sally said. "Does that interest you?"

"It certainly does."

Sally shook her head in bewilderment. "It shouldn't."

She got up from her chair, pulled Dorn erect and started for the street. "Where did you live?"

"In Stonegate, a suburb about forty miles north."

"It's ten o'clock. This should be the day and the services should be starting soon. Did you belong to a church or will they bury you from a funeral parlor?"

"I was a church-going, God-fearing man."

"What church?"

"We'll catch a train and I'll show you."

"That isn't necessary. We can travel much faster by ourselves. We aren't held back by either gravity or fric-

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tion of any kind."

"That's easy to say, but let's see you do it."

"You're awfully short-tempered. You must have been hard to live with. Maybe your wife won't even go to your funeral."

"Don't be absurd. How do we go to Stonegate without taking the train?"

"The main thing is picking an objective and holding it in your mind. I'll try to show you how it's done. Close your eyes and take my hand."

Dorn did as he was instructed.

"Now, visualize the church. Keep a picture of it in your mind. Visualize hard."

DORN PICTURED the ivy-covered walls of the trim, steepled church where he and Vicky and the children had gone every Sunday morning. Well, perhaps not every one. Suddenly all was quiet except for the wind whistling past his ears.

"Don't open your eyes," Sally said, "or you might get dizzy and turn end over end."

"Where did you learn all these things? The hard way?"

"A boy taught me. He'd been through the veil about six months when I met him."

"Interesting. And how did you manage with your baser instincts—the ones that die gradually?"

There was a surprisingly dreamy note in Sally's reply. "It seems to me I had a rather difficult time with them. But that was long ago. I hardly remember."

Dorn felt a slight bump.

"You can open your eyes now. We're here."

Dorn blinked. Sally said, "It's a nice church. A very nice one. But there don't seem to be any funerals in progress."

Dorn looked swiftly about him. He'd made no mistake. This was the church where he'd spent many uncomfortable but uplifting hours. Nothing was going on, however. The doors were closed. Not a person was in sight. If services were being held, they were for someone in a higher vibration than the one he and Sally occupied.

"I can't understand it. Aren't they going to bury me? You don't suppose they plan to leave me lying around?"

"We probably missed the day. We'll find you laid out in a funeral parlor somewhere. Any idea where it would be?"

"Stanger's, probably. He belongs to the country club and he'd no doubt be nosing around after the business."

"All right, visualize."

Dorn closed his eyes and dreamed up the transformed mansion which housed the Stanger Funeral Home. He opened his eyes and they were standing before it.

"One thing for this plane," he said, "You certainly can't beat the transportation."

Business was very slow at Stanger's. Dorn and Sally entered to find not one corpse laid out in any of the several rooms. They investigated further and discovered even the ice box was empty. People weren't passing the veil in any large numbers, it seemed. Or, if they were, they were not being buried from Stanger's.

"I don't get it," Dorn said flatly.

"There's only one place to go. Your home. You had a home, I presume?"

"A very nice one. Thirty thousand dollars with only a ten thousand dollar mortgage."

"It must have been nice."

"I imagine it's still nice. I have no reason to think it burned down since I was there last."

"We're wasting time."

DORN WAS getting the technique now. With very little help from Sally, he was soon leading her up the

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Well, this is a fine how-do-you-do. I seem to have missed my own funeral!

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walk between the neatly trimmed lawns toward the deep, cool porch.

"You must have left her rather badly off," Sally said. "She can't even afford a wreath."

"Possibly delivery was slow," Dorn said with dignity.

They went in through the front door, which was closed, and Laura, Dorn's eldest daughter, ran right through her father in a mad dash toward the stairs. She was carrying a bright red scarf.

A shrill voice called, "You give me that! It's mine! It's mine and I didn't say you could wear it!"

Patricia, two years younger than her sister, went by without realizing she could have reached out and laid a hand on—or rather into—her sire.

"Nice goings-on in a house of sorrow," Sally commented.

Another voice from just through the archway leading to the living room: "You girls stop rough-housing. I'll tell your father when he comes home."

Dorn's relief was apparent in the smile he turned on Sally. "There's your answer," he said with a certain smug triumph. "They don't know I'm dead yet. After all, I was killed on a lonely country road—"

"I wish you'd stop using the terms killed and dead. It's positively ghoulish."

"I was on my way to our cabin up north for a week of hunting—for a bit of rest. Heaven knows where that road is. It was pitch dark. The cars were probably knocked off into the undergrowth."

"You're sure another car hit you?"

"Of course."

"Then your theory doesn't hold water."

"Why not?"

"If there was another car the driver survived the crash. Otherwise he'd have been with you. If he had walked away from the wreck he certainly wouldn't have left your body lying around."

"Maybe he hid it. He might have been an unscrupulous character who didn't want to stand trial for manslaughter. He probably buried me up there and slunk away like the cur he is."

"Be that as it may," Sally said. "I'd like to meet your widow."

They found Vicky lying on the lounge in a house coat. A cup of coffee sat on the table at her elbow. She was reading a lurid-covered twenty-five-cent paper-back entitled *Halo in Brass*. Sally inspected her critically.

"Does she have nice legs?"

Dorn's eyes grew dreamy. "Terrific. I saw her for the first time in a bathing suit. That was in Florida. I was—" He bridled swiftly. "It's none of your business."

SALLY'S FACE was dead serious as she stepped close to Dorn and laid a hand on his arm. "Dorn, I'm worried about you. Really, I am. You shouldn't react that way at all. It's—as I said before—entirely abnormal. You shouldn't have any fond memories relative to this woman. That's all over and done with. You've passed beyond the veil and yet you persist in thoughts and reactions of the lower vibration."

"You mean I should forget my wife and children entirely?"

"Not forget them, but your feeling should be entirely impersonal, like—well, like ships you passed in the night."

"There's something indecent about that."

"There shouldn't be."

Dorn's eyes narrowed in thought. "You know, in a way, what you say is true. My feelings toward Vicky. They are rather impersonal. We had a nice life together but I don't feel

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sad at leaving her—or the children." Sally smiled. "That's excellent."

"But I didn't feel bad about that angle of it even before that car hit me. I had a moment to think and I cheerfully conceded the fact that another man would get hooked with—I mean, would recognize her sterling worth and marry her. I wasn't the least bit jealous."

"I think I'm beginning to understand what you mean. But that doesn't solve anything. Dorn, we've got to follow this thing through. We've got to find your body. Haven't you the least idea where you were when you passed over?"

"Not the faintest."

At that moment, deep in his mountain retreat, Jan Limpus touched a wire to a certain part of his cadaver. The body jerked as in a spasm.

Vicky looked up languidly from her book, did a double take and cried, "Dorn! What in heaven's name are you doing here?"

Jan drew back his wire. Vicky's mouth opened. Her book fell to the floor. She fainted.

Brief seconds later, at a spot five miles from the Lattimore residence, Sally said, "You did it again."

"Evidently I did. And you'll notice I've gotten onto this trick of going places in a hurry. We're way out past the country club."

Sally looked a trifle wan. The fast pace was beginning to tell. She found a grassy knoll nearby and dropped to the ground where she sat with her legs curled under her.

Dorn came over and sat down beside her. His look was openly tender. "I've gotten to be quite a problem to you, haven't I?"

She smiled. "I don't mind. It's just the confusion. It's the bewildering turns things keep taking. All these utterly insane happenings."

DORN REACHED out suddenly and took her hand. "Sally. Isn't there anything on this plane remotely resembling love or affection? Don't they have even a reasonable facsimile thereof?"

"Of course there is."

"But not between man and girl."

"Yes, between man and girl."

Dorn felt a sudden elation. "Then you've been fibbing to me. I know. You were being coy."

"I was not. What I told you referred to—well, sexual love. There is a love here between a man and a woman, but it's on a spiritual plane. It's a love of one mind for another. Soul cleaves to soul."

"How about lip cleaving to lip?"

"That doesn't make any sense."

"It does to me. Are you in love with anyone, by the way? On a high plane, I mean."

Sally lowered her eyes. "I think I am."

"The lad who taught you all the tricks?"

"No."

Dorn felt suddenly stifled. He had the mad urge to make something pop. "Sally, damn it all! I'm in love with you and it's a pretty blamed carnal type of love. It's the kind that takes legs and—and other things into consideration. The kind that has to have more satisfaction than a flight in the realm of souls."

She put a finger to his lips, seeking to stop him, but he plunged on. "I know I'm the rankest kind of a cad but I don't care. I had a wife and here I've practically forgotten about her before my body is cold, but I don't give a damn. I know I'm a heel, but what the hell?"

"You aren't a cad nor a heel. You're just a maladjusted individual."

"Whatever I am, I love you. I want to kiss you. I want to take you in my

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arms. I want to look at your legs with a feeling that they belong to me."

Sally stared at him for a long solemn moment. She seemed to consider him a weighty problem, but not a distasteful one. "I feel I should help you," she said. "Possibly by indulging in these abnormalities of yours, you'll see how meaningless they are. Maybe that's the answer. You may kiss me—and do whatever else you think necessary to fill your strange need. I'll cooperate as best I can."

"Baby!" Dorn brought her to her feet and took her slim body into his arms. His lips sought and found hers. He put a great deal into the partnership and Sally's feet left the ground.

A minute passed. Another. Then Dorn gently released Sally. There was a look of sadness in his eyes. "Is that the best you can do in the way of cooperation?"

Obviously he had hurt her deeply. Her full, rich lips trembled. "I did my best, really I did."

"Can't you remember how you cooperated back in the lower vibrations? You must have cooperated with someone unless your mother kept you locked up."

"That was a long time ago."

Dorn scratched his head. "It's a little like making love to a bag of feathers. I mean—oh, I don't know what I mean! Let's try it again."

"All right."

"Fine. Loosen up and see if you can get into the swing of it. It's very simple, really."

Again he took Sally in his arms. A look of fear dawned in her face.

THERE WAS no transition in memory or anything else; no frantic retchings nor wild agonies in uncharted space. There was only a faceful of whiskers scratching Dorn's clean-shaven jowls. A lot of sharp bones prodding into him.

A voice—scratchy, irritating—saying: "Cut it out! Leggo o' me. What are you trying to do?"

Dorn opened his eyes to stare into a face out of someone's choice nightmare. It was the face of the creature he was holding in his arms. He had, it seemed, been kissing the creature.

He said, "Who are you?"

"My name is Jan Limpus. I am a scientist. You owe me a great debt of gratitude, young man. I just brought you back to life!"

"What are you talking about? I was never dead."

Limpus evidently didn't hear the words of his cadaver. The madman's eyes were blazing. He flung his arms toward the ceiling in the most approved Hollywood mad-scientist-manner and read his lines perfectly: "I've done it! I've put life back into a cold corpse!"

Dorn was a trifle chilly when reminded of the fact. He looked down and found himself to be as naked as a lamp post. His clothing was piled on a nearby chair.

"What's been going on here?" he demanded with marked belligerence.

Limpus ignored him and spoke to the ceiling: "I, Jan Limpus, will become immortal! The first man since Frankenstein to recreate a human being!"

Limpus gave off declaiming to the ceiling and concentrated upon Dorn. He came close and poked a finger in the latter's face.

"But I'm far greater than Frankenstein! I didn't have to use odd pieces. I took a complete body and rejuvenated it. Wait until I write my paper for the medical society. I'll be famous!"

Dorn was putting on his clothes as fast as he could. As he pulled his pants on, his eyes traveled about the room. He shuddered. "Good Lord.

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This place looks like something out of a horror film."

"It is. I went to see the movie seventy-four times so I'd have every detail correct."

Dorn's mind had been a trifle foggy, but it was clearing fast. He looked at the weird caricature of a doctor with a new alertness, as though ready to grab a chair and defend himself at the least provocation.

JAN LIMPUS was oblivious of everything but his great triumph. He snatched a notebook from the table and stood with a poised pencil.

"We must get the statistics now—the details of interest. Tell me what you remember. How far back does your memory go?"

"Back to when I was about ten years old."

"Splendid! Nothing lost! Not even a fragment of recollection. Do you remember the accident?"

"What accident?"

"You were killed in your auto down on the road. But that's all right. You aren't expected to remember that."

"I remember a pair of headlights..."

Limpus made a note in his book. "Memory of time immediately before death not accurate," he mumbled as he wrote. "There may be something significant in that."

"I don't know what you're talking about. I was on my way to our cabin up in the hills for a little hunting. Some damn fool was coming along the road. Say—is there a phone here? I want to call my wife."

Limpus eyed Dorn sternly. "Young man, you aren't reacting properly at all. You're supposed to be overcome with gratitude. You should idolize me for what I've done."

"That's putting it a little strong, isn't it? If I had an accident and got knocked out, I'm grateful to you for taking care of me and I'll see that you're rewarded, but—"

"An accident! That's right! You had an accident and you were killed! When I pulled you out of that wreck, you were dead as a mackerel. Don't you understand? You were dead and I brought you back to life. Can't I get it through your thick skull that you died?"

Dorn looked stealthily about for a weapon. "You're as mad as a hatter, fellow!"

"You were dead—dead—dead!" Limpus screamed. "I brought you up here and put you on that table. I worked like crazy over you hour after hour while the storm raged around the house and even the gods laughed at me! I did it! I—" Limpus dropped weakly into a chair. "Good lord!"

"What's the matter?"

Limpus' face was a picture of consternation. "I can't remember."

"Can't remember what?"

"How I brought you back to life. I did everything I could think of. I tried a thousand things. Like a bride with her first cake. And now I can't remember what it was that brought you up off the table, completely rejuvenated."

Jan Limpus put all his new grief, all his monumental frustration, into the three words: "I can't remember!"

Dorn was adjusting his necktie. He'd certainly be glad to get clear of this mad character. They sure had weird ones hiding under the rocks in these hills.

He turned to Limpus with a hearty smile. "Well, it was nice of you to help me, and if you'll give me the address of this place, I'll send you a check. Don't bother showing me the way back to the road. I'll find it all right."

Jan Limpus sat perfectly still, veiling the cunning that had welled suddenly into his eyes. "Goodbye."

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Dorn breathed a sigh of relief. He wasn't going to have trouble after all. Just a harmless old coot.

He turned toward the door; turned his back on Limpus. That was his mistake.

Limpus moved like a cat. His hand closed over a hammer he'd used to nail shut a banging window. By the time Dorn had reached the exit, Limpus was close behind him. Dorn's fingers closed over the knob.

Then he stiffened as he heard Limpus shriek: "I can't remember! I've got to do it over again!"

There was an explosion before complete darkness rolled in.

AND DORN was standing by a grassy knoll near the golf course just outside the suburb of Stonegate. It was dark now and Dorn felt low, dispirited and very much alone.

He knew something utterly unbelievable and fantastic had occurred; something that made his strange world on the upper plane as logical and believable as the gas bill.

He was too tired to wonder about it now; that horrible dream in which a crazy man had jumped around a fantastic laboratory and talked about bringing him back to life. At this moment, he wanted Sally Williams. He wanted to feel her hand in his and see the pert, turned-up nose, the wide, solemn, blue eyes. He wanted to hear her tell him he was completely abnormal.

At the moment, that seemed the most normal thing which could possibly happen.

But Sally was not there. Dorn couldn't begin to understand it, but he'd evidently gone away and Sally had gotten tired of waiting for him.

A moment of panic seized him. Suppose he'd never find her again? It was a big world and there were no city directories on this higher plane. She could be anywhere. He could spend the rest of eternity looking for her.

Then he got control of himself. At least he could make the effort. He closed his eyes and conjured up a picture of the bedroom in the Belford Penthouse. He visualized until he perspired, but nothing happened.

He finally decided that possibly one couldn't make the swift trips while sitting down. He got to his feet and tried again. Success. The cold air rushed by his ears. Then the wind stopped and he opened his eyes.

A fat man was sitting on the edge of the bed taking off his shoes. The fat wife of the man—it would have to be his wife—came waddling out of the bathroom in a slip that looked like a tent.

Dorn stared at them with disgust and disappointment. As the man went for his pants, Dorn closed his eyes and visualized the downstairs cafeteria. This trip took but a moment and there was scarcely any wind.

But he felt a sudden surge of happiness and relief, because Sally sat at one of the tables sipping moodily at a cup of coffee. Dorn called her name.

Sally sprang to her feet. She knocked her coffee cup to the floor with a crash, but no one in the cafeteria paid the least attention. Sally ran forward.

"Dorn! Oh, Dorn! You're all right! You're safe!"

Sally's happiness was deep and sincere. "Sit down, Dorn. I'll get you a cup of coffee. Or would you rather have tea?"

"Coffee is all right. And bring a dish of pink ice cream."

SALLY WALKED through five people filling the order and brought it back to the table so quickly, it appeared she was afraid Dorn would vanish again.

As he sipped the coffee, she sat

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opposite him, drinking him in with her eyes.

"I was so frightened. You were holding—or doing whatever it was you were doing to me there by the golf course, and suddenly your aura was gone. That frightened me, but when you just faded away—disappeared into thin air—I didn't know what to do. I sat there until it got too cold and then came back here. I was hoping against hope—"

"That I'd turn up again?"

"Yes. I got awfully lonely. Where on earth did you go?"

Dorn set his cup down and frowned. "I don't know, but I went somewhere to have a nightmare, and I certainly had a lulu. I landed in some kind of laboratory kissing a character with an eight-day growth on his face. He waved his arms over the place and said he'd brought me back to life."

Dorn grinned at Sally. "You should have warned me about the dreams people have on this plane; dreams that scare them out of their boots and make them disappear for hours at a time. A little like the benders people go on down there."

Sally's solemn b'ue eyes were upon him. "But there aren't any dreams up here. No one ever dreams. It's—it's impossible."

"Dreams aren't impossible. I just had one."

"No, Dorn. What you went through really happened."

"Bosh!"

Sally leaned forward, a worried frown on her face. "Dorn, I wish I could make you take these things seriously.

He looked at her with a certain dreaminess in his eyes. "It's the same with me. I can think of something right now I wish you'd take seriously."

"Please don't be frivolous. I'm going to tell you what's been happening. This so-called madman you refer to, is real. What you told me explains a lot that has happened. He's evidently been trying to bring you back to life. That time you got stuck in the wall was once he almost succeeded. Then in the cafeteria, and at your home in Stonegate. Don't you see? When we were out by the golf course he finally succeeded, and you were drawn back into your body."

Dorn studied her eyes. He thought they were the nicest eyes he'd ever seen. He allowed his own eyes to drop lower and continue the study. He thought also that those were the nicest he'd ever seen. He stopped studying at the point where the table edge made it impractical.

There he gave a few moments to self-analysis. He was beginning, in some ways, to like this limbo or purgatory or whatever it was. Never in his life had he felt so utterly carefree and irresponsible.

He had never before felt so virile, so intensely masculine. This brought a touch of sadness. He'd heard a joke once about hell and what made it what it was. A ribald joke not for polite company. But there had certainly been a germ of truth behind it.

He sighed. "I guess a man can't have everything," he said.

"What do you mean?"

Looking at Sally, he had a sudden urge to continue the activities of the golf course; the activities so rudely interrupted by his quick trip to the north woods.

Dorn sighed. Not worthwhile. It takes two, he thought, to make a bargain, a fight, and the thing he was thinking about....

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing at all. Let's go home—I mean, let's go find a home—and go to bed."

Sally pushed back her chair. "I think it's about time."

As they left the cafeteria, Dorn made a wry face...and go to bed.

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He could clearly remember when that phrase conjured up all sort of pleasant possibilities. Here on the higher plane it only meant that you were tired.

Well, after all, he was tired.

THEY DIDN'T go to the Belford that night. For some reason, the luxury of the place failed to attract Dorn. He wondered why, and thus learned a lesson in psychology. It was too late, of course, to do him any good, but he learned it nonetheless. That luxury in itself lost a great deal of its attractiveness when he had no neighbors to envy him for being able to afford it.

They walked down the street and picked the first hotel they found; discovered a vacant room with twin beds on the fifth floor and turned in.

But hardly had they gotten to sleep when they were awakened to discover the room was no longer vacant. A bellhop came in, left a suitcase, a young couple and a smile, and departed with a dollar bill.

Dorn sat up and looked them over. The girl, he decided, wasn't bad. Of the young man, he forebore any opinion, feeling himself not qualified. He sought an opinion from Sally, feeling that she was—at least partially—qualified.

"What do you think of him?"

Sally was also sitting up in bed hugging her knees to her bosom. "He's nice."

"I'll make a bet with you."

Sally stared with no reaction whatever at the passionate clinch into which the couple had gone. They had become deeply involved in this clinch not more than two and one half seconds after the bellhop had closed the door.

"What do you want to bet?"

"That there's nothing whatever in that suitcase."

"That's absurd. Why would a married couple come to a hotel with an empty suitcase?"

"To carry away their memories, possibly, but who said anything about their being—anyhow, I'll bet you it's empty."

Dorn jumped from the bed and opened the suitcase. "I was wrong," he said.

Sally craned her neck. "What's in it?"

"Bricks. Five bricks."

"That's amazing."

Sally's interest was centered upon the newcomers. She pointed with frank amazement. "Look. Look what he's doing."

"What did you expect him to do?"

The interlude was ended when the girl broke away and ran toward the bathroom door. Dorn took a quick step in that direction. Then he stopped and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"I think we'd better check out," he said.

"Why? They won't be in our way."

"No, but—"

The young man walked toward Sally, sat down, and began removing his shoes.

"I think they're going to use your bed," Dorn observed. "I think we'd better leave."

Sally shrugged. "If you say so."

Dorn reached for his own shoes. There was a wistfulness in his voice as he said, "It would be nice to stay, but, after all, one can't take an unfair advantage just because one is in a position—anyway, let's get out of here."

They found another hotel, another vacant room. This one stayed vacant.

WHEN DORN awoke, he discovered Sally up and seated at a portable table upon which was laid an ample breakfast. She was drinking coffee and reading a newspaper.

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"Where did you get all that?"

"I went out into the hall and waited until a bellboy went by with breakfast for two. I helped myself."

"Darn clever of you. I'm hungry."

"Then get up and eat. By the way, they found your car."

"They did?"

"Yes, but not your body. It has caused quite a stir. The large type reads: 'Stonegate Realtor Vanishes'. Then it says, 'Late last night the demolished automobile belonging to Dorn Lattimore, a prominent Stonegate realtor, was found in a lonely spot on a side road off Highway Six, some fifty miles north of Stonegate. Mystery was injected into the picture when the realtor's body was discovered to be missing. The State Police have hunted far and wide for the body and have come to the conclusion that it was removed by persons unknown, or that Mr. Lattimore was not in the car at the time of the smashup.'"

"A brilliant conclusion," Dorn observed.

"There's more. 'Mrs. Lattimore, prostrated by grief, said her husband had planned a week's hunting in the north woods.'"

"Poor Vicky. She loved me very much."

"Possibly, but she'll get over it—the grief I mean."

Dorn's forehead wrinkled into a frown. "It only mentions one car. What about the guy who hit me?"

"Nobody hit you. It goes on: 'The driver of the car evidently missed a turn in the road during the storm of night before last. He smashed into a smooth granite wall at terrific speed. The police are most interested in finding a body because they feel someone was certainly killed in the accident. If not Mr. Lattimore, then some person unknown who was at the wheel.'"

Dorn was pondering deeply. "All I saw was a pair of headlights. Evidently they must have been the reflection of my own lights on the smooth granite. The granite would have been wet and—"

"No doubt. But this scientist, this man who brought you back to life?"

"He said his name was Limpus."

"He must have gotten your body. Dorn, we've got to find him."

Dorn shrugged. "How can we do that if the State Police failed? They must have done some looking around. And if Limpus isn't just a dream—if he's for real—he couldn't have carried me very far.

"But we've got to locate him. He's dangerous! There's no telling what he's doing with your body."

"I know what he's doing with it. He forgot how he brought me back to life, so he killed me again with a club so he could start over. I hope he takes notes this time. It's damned annoying to be continually killed just so some coot can—"

SALLY GOT quickly up from the table. She moved close to Dorn and stood looking up into his face. "Dorn, please don't talk that way. If he succeeded once, he can succeed again. I couldn't bear to lose you—really I couldn't!"

Dorn felt a quick surge of warmth as her face came close to his. "Angel, is this a proposal?"

"I don't know what it is, but—" she stopped speaking and he thought she was going to cry. "You want to kiss me, don't you?"

"I most certainly do."

"Then—then go ahead. I'll try—hard."

Dorn hooked a finger under her small chin and raised her face even higher. She'd closed her eyes tight. Her red lips were pursed and ready. Her entire body was stiff and unyielding. It reminded Dorn of a potential swimmer pushing a toe into

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the first cold waters of spring.

"No, angel, you're pressing. You can't get the hang of it. But I'll give you an *A* for trying." He continued to stare down at her wistfully. "If this guy Pimpus or Limpus would quit keeping my low animal instincts alive, maybe I could start loving on a higher plane—soul to soul, instead of—"

He turned away quickly, his mind off on another track. "You know what we're going to do? We're going to visit my office. I'm curious to see how Felix is taking it."

"Who is Felix?"

"My nephew. My one and only employee. My bookkeeper, secretary, and Man Friday. He's probably fluttering all over the office."

"We can go there if you wish."

"Poor old Felix."

"You said he was your nephew."

"That's right, but Felix looked old at five. He was one of those—"

Dorn bit off the last word, gulped and sat down. The bed happened to be close enough to catch him. Otherwise he'd have landed on the floor.

"Holy Zeus!"

"What on earth is the matter?"

"My insurance!"

"What about it? Did it lapse?"

"No, but without a body, Vicky can't collect. Forty thousand dollars. Good Lord! Without that, she's got about as much chance of snaring another husband as a five-legged goat. You're right, Sally. We've got to find Limpus and deliver my body to the coroner!"

"That's what I've been saying all along."

"Of course, there's no immediate worry. My creditors will rain down, of course, but Felix can handle them. There's nine thousand dollars cash in the safe at the office. Even after paying the bills, it will keep Vicky going for a while. But we've got to find Limpus."

"Then finish dressing and let's get started."

A FEW minutes later, Dorn stood stiffly in the middle of the room and conjured up the picture of a fantastic laboratory with electrodes and glass jars and a great quantity of twisted copper tubing. With his eyes shut tight, he gripped Sally's hand and awaited results.

They came swiftly. A sensation of great speed; a cold wind whipping past Dorn's ears and the pressure of an air buildup against his chest, making breathing difficult.

"Success," Dorn said happily.

"That isn't what worried me."

"What did worry you?"

"I can't imagine what we'll do when we get there. We're helpless to interfere with him. We'll just be observers."

"All right. We'll be observers until he brings me back again. Then I'll get off the table and conk him."

"But Dorn! Then you'll be alive! You'll be back on the lower plane and you won't even remember me. You won't know I exist."

"That's right. While I was in the laboratory, I couldn't remember a thing about this plane. And yet, when I'm here I can remember what went on down there. How does that happen?"

"The higher always governs the lower."

"Then we ought to be able to handle Limpus."

Sally shook her head. "That isn't the way it works. Don't ask me why. I don't know. It just doesn't."

"Well, we'll have to wait for the breaks."

A moment's pause.

"Say, isn't it taking us a long time to get there? Where does this Limpus live? In Tibet?"

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At that moment the wind ceased to whine. The air pressure dropped to zero. "We're here," Dorn said. He opened his eyes.

"We made it. Look."

Sally opened her eyes to see a weird place strictly in the Frankensteinian mood. There were tables filled with chemical equipment; strange electrically driven machines; a high ceiling hidden away behind eerie dimness.

BUT THE place was entirely deserted except for one morose individual seated on a packing case reading a copy of *Variety*. The man was eating his lunch.

"Is that Limpus?"

"No."

"Then maybe he's Limpus' assistant."

"I didn't see any assistant when I was here before."

"It's strange. I don't see you lying around on any of these tables."

"I'm just as glad you don't. I was stark naked and I doubt if Limpus is the kind to pull a sheet over anybody." Dorn frowned as he surveyed the quiet room. "You know, I don't get it. This is all just as it was and yet it's not familiar. It looks like the same place, but it doesn't feel like it."

Came a yell from off in the distance: "On the set! On the set, everybody! Let's look alive!"

Came the dawning: "You know where we are? In Hollywood. No wonder it was a long trip. I visualized a movie horror-setting and the higher plane delivered, but it couldn't be expected to know which one I wanted."

"You mean Limpus copied his laboratory from a movie set?"

"Exactly. He told me he saw the movie sixty or seventy times in order to get it exact."

"Then how does it happen they're still making the movie?"

"This is a sequel, no doubt. They use the same set over and over again. The public doesn't know the difference. They aren't as observing as Limpus."

The set had now become crowded with people who were running to and fro, hauling, yelling, and making a great to-do. A mad-professor type strode by, his black eyes, accentuated by makeup, burning like two hot coals. The heroine, flanked by two maids, came down the set, walking straight toward Sally and Dorn. They remained where they were and when the actress had gone on, Dorn chuckled.

"Who'd have thought the day would come when Hetty LaMott walked right through me?"

"I don't like her," Sally said. "She looks coarse."

"But in a nice way."

Lights flared all over the place and a man came in wrapped in a sheet. He climbed on one of the tables, pulled the sheet over his face, and apparently went to sleep.

"That's me," Dorn said. "I mean, that's the guy they bring back in the movies. Looks like a pretty easy job."

Sally's concern was deepening. "Dorn, what are we going to do? We tried to find Limpus and failed. Will we come back here every time we try to reach him?"

"I don't know."

"Maybe we'll have to wait until they tear this set down."

"That will be sometime in 1965. The demand for horror pictures goes on and on. And what with television, they'll probably be building more of them—not tearing any down."

"Then what can we do?"

"Let's go to my office. I want to see how Felix is making out."

Sally sighed. "I guess we may as well. Wait a minute." She walked over to where Hetty LaMott was seated in a canvas chair with the makeup girl freshening her face.

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Sally took the lipstick out of the maid's hand and examined it critically. "There's nothing special about this. It's the same stuff I used to buy in the dime store."

Dorn standing beside her, grinned. "Why don't you try some?"

"We don't need such things on the higher plane." She dropped the stick into her pocket. I'll keep it for a souvenir."

Dorn did not reply.

I'm ready to go now," Sally said. "What are you looking at?"

"The pleasures of a past existence," Dorn sighed.

Sally followed his eyes down to the point where the low cut bodice of Hetty LaMott's dress ended in a V. It was so low one could easily visualize things even lower down.

Sally's eyes were wide and innocent. "Is that attractive? Does it draw you?"

"No," Dorn said sharply. "I'm of the higher plane now. Let's go."

THEY OPENED their eyes in the office of Dorn Lattimore, Real Estate and Insurance. Dorn pointed to the little wisp of a man sitting behind the desk. "That's Felix. Look at him. He's always worried about something. I could never find out what."

"Worry can age you. Who is the other man?" She referred to a round-faced individual who was seated beside the desk.

"That's Matthew Torp. He did some work on my house—added another room. He evidently read the newspapers and came kiting up here with his bill."

As though Dorn's words were a cue, Matthew Torp took a folded paper from his pocket and laid it on the desk before Felix. The latter picked it up in nervous fingers, opened it.

"You'll find it all itemized," Torp said easily. "Course, I'd have given Dorn more time, bless his departed soul, but with the way things are—did he owe much money?"

"Quite a little," Felix replied. Something around seven thousand dollars."

Dorn's voice screamed out in sudden indignation: "You're a liar by the clock! I never owed that much in my life ! My liabilities don't run over three thousand dollars!"

"Save your breath, Dorn. They can't hear you."

Dorn turned indignantly. "But he's lying."

Sally shrugged. "It doesn't matter. That's all on the lower plane. You musn't let it upset you."

"It does upset me!"

Felix unfolded the bill. Dorn looked over his shoulder and almost hit the ceiling. "Why, you dirty pirate! You fat gangster! We agreed on eleven hundred dollars! This bill reads nineteen fifty."

Dorn turned to Sally. "They're stealing my money! They're robbing me blind."

"What difference does it make? You have no further use for it."

"But what about my wife and children?"

"I didn't know you had a wife."

"Quit being technical— my widow then."

Sally shrugged. "It shouldn't matter to you in the least."

"But it does." Dorn stamped back and forth across the office. "Well, maybe I don't care about the money. As a matter of fact, I don't seem to. As long as room and board don't cost anything and I can travel free, money doesn't seem to be very important."

"Now you're taking a sensible viewpoint."

"But I'm still mad; it's the principle of the thing. This lard-head is making a sucker out of me!"

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"I'm afraid there isn't much you can do about it."

"I'll find something—"

FELIX WAS speaking and Dorn stopped to listen. Felix appeared to be embarrassed as well as old and worried. "This puts me in a rather delicate spot, Mr. Torp. I hardly know what to say, but I guess I must face it."

"Face what?" Torp wanted to know.

"The truth. You see—well, it wasn't generally known—in fact no one knew it, but Mr. Lattimore was in rather desperate financial straits. I'm very much afraid his creditors will have to be satisfied with about ten cents on the dollar."

Dorn began tearing at his hair. He began screaming at Felix. He began calling Felix lower vibrational names that would have turned a longshoresman pale.

"They can't hear a word you're saying, Sally reminded him.

"But he's a crook—a thief! There's nine thousand cash in that safe—or there was when I left the office last!"

"How did you happen to keep so much money around?" Sally asked.

"I had to do it that way or else pay income tax. Wait a minute—what does it matter to you? You said money isn't important."

"It isn't. I was just curious."

Torp was also busy blowing his top. Tempers were flaring on both planes. "Why, the dirty crook! Then he got me to do that work knowing he couldn't pay me!"

"And thinking I'm dead," Dorn yelled back, "you walk in here with your bare face hanging out and charge me these prices. Who's calling who a crook?"

Torp, of course, paid no attention, and Felix got in a word: "I think you malign Mr. Lattimore."

"How much is his house worth?" Torp wanted to know.

"Would you throw a widow and her children into the street?"

"I sure would! How much is it worth?"

"About twenty thousand, but it makes no difference. The house is in Mrs. Lattimore's name."

Torp groaned. "He sure was a cagey sneak!"

"Don't call me a sneak, you robber!" Dorn bellowed.

Torp got a sudden thought. "What about insurance? He was in the business. He certainly carried some."

"About forty thousand dollars."

THE FAT contractor sighed with relief. "We're all right then." He wiped his face and grinned. "You had me worried there for awhile."

"But you mustn't count on the insurance. It can't be collected until they find Mr. Lattimore's body. So far, they haven't had much luck, and it doesn't look as though they're going to have any."

"It's pure thievery!" Torp shouted. "There ought to be a law! I'm going to call a creditor's meeting. We'll lobby for legislation. They can't do this to us."

Felix got up from his chair. "I wish you all the luck in the world, Mr. Torp. In the meantime, I have work to do."

Torp struggled up out of his chair. "You'll hear from us later. Don't think you're getting away with this!"

"I'll be glad to hear from you. I'll no doubt be appointed to look after Mr. Lattimore's affairs. Let me know when the creditors are willing to settle at a reasonable figure."

"You call ten cents on the dollar reasonable?"

Felix shrugged. "It's better than nothing."

Torp stormed out of the office,

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brushing through Sally who was standing by the door. "I don't like him," she said. "He's greasy. Do you have many creditors like him?"

"I have very few creditors. Not more than five or six. Ferguson, Wilson, Diehl. Lord! How can a man go through life not knowing his secretary and bookkeeper is an out-and-out crook?" Dorn shook a doubled fist at Felix, who was calmly going through some papers.

Dorn strode to the wall safe and twirled the dial. He opened the door and thrust his arm inside. His hand came out holding a ten-dollar bill.

"Ten bucks. Out of nine grand he leaves ten bucks for my widow and orphans. A fine specimen of humanity."

Sally went to him and laid a hand on his arm. "Dorn, don't get so worked up. They'll get along. People always get along. We've got more important things to worry about. We've got to locate Limpus—remember?"

"That's right," Dorn said grimly. "It's even more important now. We've got to get my body so Vicky can collect the insurance. If she doesn't get it, she's sunk."

"Have you any suggestions as to how we go about it?"

"No. Have you got any? After all, you've been on this plane longer than I have. You should know your way around."

"I've been giving it some thought. I believe I've found where we made our mistake."

"I wish you'd explain."

"You visualized his laboratory and there was another one just like it. But there certainly can't be another man just like Limpus. If you visualized him, it might work."

"Clever idea," Dorn said. "Shall we try it now, or do you want something to eat first?"

"I'm hungry. Let's find a drugstore. It isn't as good as a cafeteria, but it'll do."

THEY LEFT Dorn's office and went to a place on the corner where Dorn had often eaten while still alive. Dorn took two salmon sandwiches and two cups of coffee from a pair of stenographers who were having a snack on the boss's time. They sat at the counter and refreshed themselves.

When they had finished, Dorn got off his stool and took Sally's hand. "Do you remember what Limpus looked like?" Sally asked.

"I kissed him. I ought to remember."

Dorn closed his eyes. He conjured up the whisker-strewn face, the lean, sparse body.

The wind whistled about his ears.

"Looks as though it's working," Dorn said.

"Don't be too confident. We thought it was working the last time."

"That was different. As a matter of fact, it worked then too. Just a technicality that we didn't find Limpus."

The wind died and the air was again warm. They opened their eyes. They looked around, then stared at each other blankly.

"We're right back where we started," Dorn said.

"That's true." Sally pointed to the counter. "There's the crust of my sandwich still on the plate."

"Funny. Things are getting worse. Before, we at least went somewhere."

Then Jan Limpus walked past them and entered a telephone booth.

"That's him," Dorn said, pointing. "It's Limpus."

"But what's he doing in Stonegate?"

"I don't know, but he's making a telephone call right now."

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They lost no time in approaching the booth Limpus had entered. They watched Limpus drop a dime and spin the dial.

"Who do you suppose he's calling?"

"How do I know? I'm no mind reader," Dorn replied.

Jan Limpus said, "Hello—hello! Is this Miz Dorn Lattimore?"

"He's calling Vicky."

"Do you suppose he's a friend of hers?"

"Of course not!" Dorn snapped.

"I'm a fellow named Limpus, Miz Lattimore—Jan Limpus. I got me a little place up the line a few miles in the woods. A place the State Police couldn't find if they hunted the next fifty years. I been reading the papers and I drove down here thinking maybe you and I could do a little business, private-like."

"I wish I knew what she was saying," Dorn said.

"Why don't you put your ear to the receiver and find out?"

"Of course. Why not?"

Dorn stepped into the booth.

Sally said, "Well?"

"She asked him what he wants."

"Think maybe it better be private," Limpus said. "Maybe I can come over?"

A MOMENT later Dorn reported to Sally: "She says she's not interviewing strangers during her bereavement."

Limpus sighed. "That's too bad."

"She wants to know why he can't tell her over the phone."

"Guess I can. I called to ask if you want your late husband's body back."

"She said, 'What do you think?'" Dorn glanced quickly at Sally. "Vicky always was quick with the repartee."

"I figured probably you would. I read the papers. Seems he's got quite a chunk of insurance. I've heard tell you can't collect no money without no body."

"She says stop wasting time and get to the point."

"Well, I got the body. Been using it for some experiments, but it's getting kind of worn out and I guess I'm not going to have any luck. I'm getting kind of tired of this Frankenstein business anyhow. Want to open a motel on Highway Six."

Dorn forgot to report Vicky's reply, which was, "What is this? Some kind of a gag?"

"Not at all, Miz Lattimore. But with that body being worth forty thousand dollars, it comes pretty high by the pound. Seems like you ought to be willing to pay a little something to get it back."

"She says she'll see him in hell first."

"And furthermore," Vicky went on, "don't think you're so clever. The State Police will find your hideout and I'll tell them all about this little conversation. You'll spend your declining years in jail, Mr. Whoever-you-are."

"Jan Limpus is the name, ma'am. Sorry you take it that way. I sure did want that motel. Sure you won't change your mind?"

Dorn jerked his head sharply away from the receiver. "I didn't get all that," he told Sally.

Limpus said, "Goodbye, ma'am. It was nice talking to you."

He quitted the booth and stood for a few moments picking his teeth with a match stick. He seemed to be debating some weighty problem. After a while, he went to the back counter and waited until the clerk saw him and came over to be of service.

"You got any lye?" Limpus asked.

"How much did you want?"

"A couple of five-pound bags."

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"He's going to dispose of my body!" Dorn cried.

SALLY SMILED. "That's right. Isn't it wonderful? All's well that ends well, as the man once said. Darling, let's go and find a hotel. I'm tired."

"Not on your life!"

"But I have no life!"

"I've told you before—stop being technical."

"Then you're not going to let this thing drop?"

"I certainly am not! I'm going to follow this maniac. My body isn't going to rot away in some lime pit. It's going to be buried decently and Vicky's going to get that insurance."

"But Dorn, there's something you've overlooked. On each plane of existence there are seven sins. You know what the sins on the lower plane are, but do you know about the ones on this plane?"

"No. What are they?"

"The first and most important one is not to interfere with the affairs on the plane below us."

"Is that right? So they made a separate sin just for me? Mighty far-seeing of them."

"What do you mean?"

"There's no way we can interfere with things on the lower plane unless we're brought back to life. And I'm the only one that has had that happen to him. That is, Frankenstein and I."

Sally's face fell. "Well, I think it ought to be made a sin, anyhow."

Limpus was putting a wallet back into his pocket and was picking up two bags of lye.

"We'll follow him," Dorn said.

Sally brightened. "Wait a minute. You just said no one up here can interfere down there unless he's brought back to life. That lets you out. Limpus has quit experimenting on your body."

Dorn's shoulders drooped in defeat. "That's right. What am I going to do? I'm licked."

"Of course you are," Sally retorted happily. "And I'll tell you what we're going to do. Have some supper. Then take a walk and go to bed. We'll clear our minds. Then we'll wake up tomorrow resolved to settle down and lead normal lives until the call comes."

"What call?"

"The final one. When Death lays his gentle hand upon our brows and we go to our eternal reward."

"That's what I heard all my life. I kept it in mind and here I am just as bad off as I was before. What do you have to do to really die?"

"There's nothing you can do."

"Just wait in line, eh?"

"Await the call."

"I am beginning to doubt everything. How do you know we don't just step through another veil? You've heard of the dance of the seven veils, haven't you?"

"That has nothing to do with the subject."

"No? For all we know, we've just begun. We may have six more stops yet."

SALLY, WATCHING out of the corner of her eye, saw Limpus leave the drugstore and disappear around the corner. She breathed a sigh of relief. "Well, let's not stand here arguing philosophy and theology. Let's go somewhere and sit down. My feet hurt."

"Okay. But don't think you sidetracked me. I saw Limpus leave the store. I let him go because I've got to have a little time to think this thing out—form a plan. I need a breather. I can pick him up any time I want him."

Sally's high spirits continued. They had dinner in a small tea room where they went from table to table until

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they found two ladies who had ordered fricasseed chicken, a dish they both liked.

Dorn sat silent and preoccupied through the entire meal, completely surrounded by the fleshiest of the two women. Sally tried several times to strike up a conversation, but Dorn answered only in monosyllables and she finally gave up, having to content herself through the rest of the meal with listening to one of the women complain about her lumbago.

After dinner, they strolled down the street until they came to a small hotel. "It looks nice," Sally said.

"It is nice. I had lunch here every Tuesday with the Rotarians."

All they could find was a room with a double bed. It was comfortable enough, though, and Sally went right to sleep.

But Dorn lay for a long time staring at the ceiling. He couldn't sleep.

THEY HAD breakfast in a drugstore the following morning. Little was said. Dorn wore a grim expression, and when breakfast was over he announced:

"Now to business. We're going to visit Mr. Jan Limpus."

"Oh, Dorn! Haven't you forgotten all that? Aren't you going to give it up? I think it's time we had some fun. I thought maybe we'd go to Florida."

"It appears to me that the facilities for fun are rather restricted on this plane, but that's beside the point. We'll go to Florida after I get certain matters straightened out."

"But there's nothing you can do."

"Maybe not, but I can try. Come on. Take my hand."

Sally shrugged in defeat and put her small hand into Dorn's. The latter squeezed his eyes shut tight and conjured up a mental picture of the odious Mr. Limpus. Results came automatically. The wind; the feeling of endless space; the heady sense of freedom.

The wind died.

They opened their eyes and looked around. The same eerie setting, but now there were no cameras in evidence, no prop man grabbing a quick lunch. There was only silence and the man Limpus bending over a form on one of the tables. He was mumbling to himself as he worked.

"Guy doesn't like to give up so easy—matter of pride—did it once, by golly—ought to be able to do it again—this man Lattimore's getting kind of worn out, though—"

Sally's hand stiffened—squeezed Dorn's fingers. "He's trying it again!"

Dorn grinned. "He sure is."

"Well, do something! Stop him! Hit him with a chair."

Dorn's expression was a bit smug. "Why, you're positively blood-thirsty this morning, my dear. You should have lived in the days of the old Romans—attended the games in the Colosseum."

"But he can't be allowed to do it! It's—it's against nature."

"Possibly. But you know yourself, we can do nothing."

Dorn stepped close to the table. Sally followed a bit timidly.

"Goodness," Dorn said, "I look terrible! I certainly haven't been given any loving attention in this place."

"You should be in a grave with a tombstone over your head. Of all the indecent—"

"I think I'd like that. It's not right for a man to be kicked around from pillar to post this way. But I guess mine is an exceptional case."

Limpus was puzzling over a mass of copper wire.

"Look," Dorn said, "he's tying those four ends together. Do you think the man has the least idea of what he's doing?"

"Of course not. He should be put

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into an institution."

LIMPUS SECURED the wires, extended them, and tied them to the wrist of Dorn's body. He stood back and surveyed the pattern of the wires and electrodes fastened to the corpse.

"Seems like that's about how it was," he grumbled. "Man's a damn fool to experiment without keeping records. When I get that motel of mine, I'll keep a diary. I'll make me some peep holes into the cabins. Man owes it to himself to keep track of what's going on."

Sally gasped. "He's a moron as well as an imbecile and a maniac! He should be in a padded cell!"

Limpus threw a switch. There was a flash of blue flame. He jumped back, tripped over a chair and fell backwards. His head came into violent contact with the sharp corner of a heavy steel table. There was a crunching sound.

Limpus got up, blinked stupidly, and asked, "Where in tarnation am I?"

There was no answer. He looked groggily about and saw a girl standing near him. She was a very pretty girl with large blue eyes, wearing a smart sport suit. Also, there was frank hostility in her manner.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she said.

"Me? Ashamed? What've I got to be ashamed of?"

"You mean you don't know? Prying into secrets you've no right to pry into. Setting yourself up as God! Trying to do His work. Such things can only end in terrible disaster."

A dawning came into Limpus' bleary eyes. "You mean a thunderbolt hit me? I've come to my reward?" He looked around with renewed interest. "Then where in tarnation is it? Everything looks the same."

Sally's withering contempt had no effect upon him. He didn't even appear to notice it. He looked at Sally again. "Maybe you're it," he said.

"Maybe I'm what?"

"My reward." Limpus took a step forward. "Now, the Mohammedans —they claim—"

"Stay away from me," Sally warned.

LIMPUS PAID no attention. Sally backed away. He kept coming. Then Sally, trapped in a space between a table and a large bookcase, flung up her hands in defense.

Limpus reached out and took her in his arms.

Sally cried, "Dorn! Dorn! Help me!"

Limpus paid no attention. There was surprising strength in his lean form. He folded Sally to his breast and nuzzled her face with his own.

Sally objected strenuously, screaming into his whiskers. "Let go of me, you—you repulsive old man. I hate you! You smell bad. Let go of me!"

Limpus seemed not to hear the words. Nonetheless, a peculiar change of manner came over him. He raised his head and frowned; then looked down at Sally.

He said, "For a pretty girl, you've got about as much sex appeal as a dead fish, ma'am. It's—it's like kissing one of those big dolls you see in toy stores. What's wrong with you, ma'am?"

"There's nothing wrong with me!" Sally stormed. "It's you—you big ape!"

Limpus' arms went lax. Sally pushed him with all her strength. He teetered backwards, came to a halt against a table, stood there.

"What do you mean, it's me?"

"You fell and broke your skull. You passed through the veil. You left all your low, beastly, animal instincts behind you."

"I did?"

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"You certainly did, thank heaven! Now you're nothing but a big harmless oaf. Why don't you go away?"

Limpus looked around the laboratory, bewildered. "Don't appear as there's any place to go, ma'am. This is where I belong. Here's my tables—my books..." He glanced at the table upon which lay the still, naked form of Dorn Lattimore. "There's even the body I was working on. Found it myself down by the road—brought it up here on my back—tried to rejuvenate it."

"That's what you should be ashamed of."

"But I did a good job, ma'am. Look. It's breathing."

Dorn was breathing. His thin, ravaged chest was rising and falling spasmodically. The pale hands clenched and unclenched. The throat worked.

"He's opening his eyes," Sally whispered. In cold rage she turned on Limpus. "It's your fault! You did it!"

Suddenly her manner changed. She smiled at Limpus, laid a gentle hand on his shoulder. "Maybe I was wrong," she said, sweetly. "Maybe I misjudged you when I should be helping you get accustomed to your new plane. It's a wonderful place, you know. You can go anywhere. See anything. You can do it in the twinkling of an eye."

"I can?"

"Of course. Now, I'll tell you what you do. Close your eyes and think of a place. No—don't hold my hand. I can't go with you just now. Stand there and think of the Pacific Ocean. Think of way down deep in the water—the deepest spot there is. Think of a hole under a rock down there. Think hard—very hard."

Limpus said, "But ma'am—"

It was too late. Sally smiled at the spot Limpus had occupied.

But only for a moment. Soon her eyes went back to the thin form on the table. She began to cry.

Dorn Lattimore lay on the cold, enamel-topped table trying to adjust his vision. He shuddered. The movement brought weakness and violent nausea. He closed his eyes again and fought the horror of existence. Never in his life had he been so weak, so sick, so abysmally unhappy.

Struggling for breath, he tried to remember what had happened. But it all seemed so far away, so long ago. He had a wife named Vicky. He lay for a moment trying to remember what she looked like.

A honey blonde? No. Of course not. Where had he gotten that idea? Vicky had black hair. And there was Patricia—and another daughter. What was the second daughter's name? Dorn wasn't sure. He couldn't remember. It didn't matter, though. He'd find out when he got home.

Another thing, too. He should probably keep a closer check on Felix. A check on Felix? Why? What was the need? Felix was as honest as sunlight. Where, Dorn wondered, was he getting all these wild ideas?

Reluctantly, he forced himself to consider the present. It took will power, because he shrank from the effort involved in opening his eyes and looking around. But it had to be done. He realized he had no clothes on and that he was cold. He'd have to get to his feet before he froze to death.

By dint of pure grit he opened his eyes. All he saw was a swimming blur. Gradually it cleared as his eyes found focus. He lay looking at the high beamed ceiling. He turned his head, winced at the pain in his neck, and took in the laboratory.

Strange, but he seemed to have recollections of this place; of how he'd gotten here. No. Not how he'd gotten here, but he remembered waking up here—wrestling with a whiskered man—putting his clothes on. He

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remembered getting as far as the door. Then—blotto.

I seem to go around and around, Dorn thought. How many times do I have to get dressed in this place? It's like riding a carousel. Around and around.

HE TURNED his head still further, thus bringing a prone, still body into his range of vision. Recognition coursed through him, bringing violent shock. His teeth chattered and he lay there shivering—yet without the strength to get up and do something about it.

The spasm passed to some extent, but he was still shaking, trembling pitifully as he twisted his head around to look again at the body.

Certainly! That was the man he'd seen before. A wild-eyed character who'd talked about bringing him back from the dead.

But now this character needed to be brought back from the dead himself. His body was sprawled near a table-leg, his neck turned at an impossible angle. Obviously the back of his skull had been crushed by sharp impact.

Did I do that? Dorn asked himself. Did I kill the man? Am I a murderer?

By dint of superhuman effort, Dorn pushed his legs off the table. The rest of his body followed, but he could not control it and he went into a heap on the floor.

He lay there for a time, breathing heavily, suffering the agony of the damned. Then, grimly, he went about getting to his feet. It took him several minutes to pull himself up and across the table, half prone, half erect.

I've got to get some clothes on, he told himself. I've got to get warm. His teeth were chattering, his body trembling violently. It seemed that even the marrow of his bones was as cold as the arctic wastes.

He made a valiant effort to reach the chair upon which his clothes lay. He pulled himself the length of the table, but from there on the going would be more difficult. Ten feet of open floor intervened. Ten feet. A thousand feet. A chasm a thousand feet deep. He'd need ropes and heavy boots—and help.

It was too damn much trouble. He collapsed to the floor and lay there. For a while his teeth chattered. Then he had a dream about a girl—a honey-blonde. He warmed up some then and it wasn't so bad.

FIVE MEN, obviously unaccustomed to the rigors of outdoor life, staggered, waddled, and crawled through the hilly north woods. They were a motley crew. Tall, short, fat, thin, but they had one thing in common. They all had money coming from one Dorn Lattimore.

In order to collect that money, it seemed that either Mr. Lattimore or Mr. Lattimore's body had to be turned up. They were not men to be easily shunted away from what they had coming—so they had another thing in common: the determination not to go home until they had found a body.

Matthew Torp seemed to have assumed leadership. He took off his hat, wiped his broad, bald head, and peered through the trees. "You sure wouldn't think country could be this wild only sixty or so miles from a big city."

"You're telling me," Tom Wilson grumbled. "A man's got to earn his money and then come out here and crawl around in mud and brambles in order to collect it. Fine thing."

Mort Diehl was beginning to lose heart. "I got a hunch we're wasting our time. After all, the State Police looked and they couldn't find no body. They ought to be better at hunting

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than we are."

Torp snorted. "They collect their dough whether they find Lattimore or not. We don't. That may make some difference. Then, too, I don't think those boys are so eager to get their nice uniforms all dirty. They're probably sitting in their cars on the road waiting for the corpse to walk out and thumb a ride."

"I think this is kind of silly," Sam Ferguson said. "A waste of man-power. Why don't we spread out and cover more territory?"

Diehl and Wilson were against this. Diehl said, "And get lost? Pretty soon we'd be hunting for each other. I got no hankering to wander around in these woods alone."

"That's right," Wilson added, "Let's just keep going. We ought to bump into something before long, even if it's only the mountain."

"We'll try and travel in a circle," Torp said. "That way we won't get too far from the road. We'll keep coming back to it."

"We don't know where the hell we are, so we'll probably travel in a circle whether we want to or not," Tom Wilson said. He was the gloomiest of the group. "I only got fifty dollars coming from Lattimore. I don't know whether this is worth it or not."

"Add a little service charge for collecting," Torp suggested. "Let's get going."

THEY LUMBERED through the woods—Torp like a great bull moose breaking tracks in the denser growth for the rest of them. They traveled for an hour without comment. Then Wilson dropped to a rock, slumped forward and wiped his streaming face. "This is all I can take. I'm quitting."

Torp came back to look down on him with scorn. "Giving up, huh? Yellow, huh?"

Wilson flared. "I'm not yellow. Only sensible. I know when I'm licked. I'm going over to that house yonder and ask for a drink of water. Then I'm going to try and find my way home."

The question came in concert. "What house?"

"Right over there in the trees. Can't you see it?"

Torp looked and said, "For Chrisake! Why didn't you tell us there was a house over there? You idiot!"

"I supposed you saw it. You were leading this show. You must be blind. We've been circling it for the last hour. Besides, we aren't looking for a house. We're looking for Lattimore."

Torp favored Wilson with a snort of disgust, then grew thoughtful as he stared at the weather-stained structure back among the trees. "You got pretty good eyes at that," he said.

Wilson was not in a cordial mood. "I can find my way down a street after dark," he snapped.

"It's amazing the way that place blends with the trees. No wonder the State Police didn't find it." Torp's spirits were rising. He laughed. "They didn't have you along, Tom."

"You think it's what we're looking for?"

"I don't know, but we'll find out, anyhow. Come on."

They moved in single file toward the house.

"Here's a door," Wilson said a few minutes later. "Shall we knock?"

"Might be a good idea. It looks deserted, though. Here—let me."

Torp whaled his ham of a fist against the panel. The sound echoed into the house, out again, and off among the trees. The men waited.

Nothing happened and Torp knocked again. A minute passed.

Ferguson said, "If anybody's home, they're asleep."

"Not after that racket," Diehl ob-

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served. "Try the door, Mat."

Torp wrapped his fist around the knob and twisted. The door opened on creaking hinges. Another long minute ticked by.

Wilson said, "Well, what are you waiting for? Go on in."

"Don't rush me—don't rush me. Plenty of time. We found the place—that's the main thing."

"Sure, but we can rot standing out here waiting for something to happen. Go on in."

"Maybe we better go for the police," Ferguson suggested.

"Not yet," Torp said. "Come on. Here we go."

ONE BY one, they filed into the silent house; into a strange silent room. In one corner, an electric arc was traveling back and forth between two points on some fantastic machine. It threw a ghostly radiance over the room.

For a long time the men remained silent, ready to jump and run at the least sound. If a mouse had suddenly scooted across the floor, it would have caused a panic.

But no sound came until Torp's hoarse whisper broke the silence. "Golly! Did you guys ever see such a joint?"

"Looks like something out of a horror movie."

"Maybe that's what it is. Maybe movie companies come up here to shoot pictures."

"Why would they do that?"

"Well, to avoid publicity maybe."

Torp snorted. "Who ever heard of a movie outfit that didn't want publicity?"

"All the same, there's something mighty unhealthy about this place. Something ghoulish."

Gradually courage arose in the group. They took careful steps forward; gentle steps calculated to leave a drowsy rodent peacefully sleeping.

Dead quiet until Wilson choked, "For God's sake! Look!"

"Look at what?"

"There—on that table. A corpse! A body! It ain't got no clothes on it!"

"I'll be doubly damned!" Torp whispered fervently. "I think it's Dorn Lattimore."

"I wonder if he's alive."

"We better find—"

Now Ferguson squalled, "Yipe! Look out! There on the floor. Another corpse."

"Holy criyi," Torp exclaimed. "What's been going on here? The place looks like a slaughter house."

Torp turned and moved toward Ferguson's find. This was a little less ghoulish, somehow. Possibly the blood and the signs of honest and wholesome death lent authenticity to the scene.

TORP BENT down and examined the remains of Jan Limpus. "Wild looking character, and he's sure dead. He was murdered or my name ain't Torp."

Wilson had gained courage and was investigating the body on the table. He studied it for some moments and then laid his ear to its chest. He jerked himself erect.

"Lattimore's still alive. Come here! Help me!"

They crowded around the table while Wilson went somewhere and brought back a glass of water. He raised Dorn Lattimore's head and tried to pour the liquid down his throat, but failed.

"He's alive though. His heart's beating. We've got to get him to a doctor."

"There's been devilish things going on here," Ferguson muttered darkly as he looked around the room.

Torp had been standing back surveying the scene from under heavy brows. "Wait a minute," he said.

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"Let's talk this over. I think it's time we had a conference. It ain't a good thing to forget why we're here."

"What are you talking about?" Wilson demanded. We've got a sick man on our hands."

"We may have something else. We may have a murderer."

Diehl spoke for the first time in quite a while. "You mean Lattimore? You think maybe he killed this man?"

Torp shrugged. "It isn't what I think. It's how the police will take it. Now, after all, Dorn here was one of us. We don't want him standing no trial for murder."

"If we don't get him to a doctor," Wilson snapped, "it will make no difference one way or another. He's almost dead now."

"But I think we better agree first to tell everybody we found him out in the woods."

Wilson frowned. "I can't figure you out, Torp. You know you hated Dorn's guts. Always have. What's behind all this sudden concern for his welfare? If he killed a man, it's up to the law to decide what happens."

Torp grew expansive. "Now let's take it easy. That's not the way we should feel about it. I liked Dorn. I always did."

"I think I get it now," Wilson said. "You've got it all figured out. All the money Lattimore has is the insurance due his wife. If he's tried and goes to the chair for murder, she can't collect. That means you whistle for your money."

"We'd all whistle," Torp said.

"I knew I was right. And if he draws a jail term, you still can't collect."

"Well, we got to think of our own interests."

TORP WAS suddenly the target of cold looks from all directions.

Diehl asked, "Mat, how much did Dorn owe you?"

"That's none of your business."

"More than five hundred dollars?"

"I said it was none of your business."

"Couldn't have been much more. All you did was add a room to his house."

"Cut this out," Wilson barked. "Help me with Lattimore. See if you can find some blankets or something. We've got to wrap him up and carry him to the car. Then get him to town and bring the police back to this place."

It took half an hour to get back to the road and over an hour to drive back to Stonegate. They debated stopping off to find a doctor on the way, but thinking of possible time lost in the hunt, they voted to continue into town.

There they drove into the emergency ramp of the Stonegate hospital and Wilson breathed easier. "That's all we can do," he said, "except call the police and send them to that weird hideout. I'll take care of it."

Late that afternoon, a pair of State Troopers called on Tom Wilson.

"We located the place, but something must have happened. We found it burned to the ground. Lucky the woods was wet or we'd have had a forest fire on our hands. All we found in the way of a body was a few charred bones."

Later Wilson called on Matthew Torp. Wilson said, "I don't like you any more, Mat. I don't think any of the other boys do, either."

"What the hell's the matter with you? All I tried to do was protect our interests."

"The police tell me there was a fire. That place burned down."

"Is that so?"

"Uh-huh. And as I remember it, you hung behind when we left. I wondered what you were up to."

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"You're imagining things."

"I don't think so. And something else. It was all a waste of time, Mat. Trying to cover up evidence. All unnecessary."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"I'll tell you. Dorn Lattimore died ten minutes ago. Never regained consciousness."

DORN LATTIMORE stood in the middle of a burned-out house. Wisps of smoke crawled lazily upward from the ruins about him. But Dorn didn't care. He knew something had happened, but he didn't care what nor how. He had only one thought in mind.

He closed his eyes, concentrated, and opened them to the sound of rattling silver. He grinned, walked up to a table and said, "Hello."

Sally whirled up from her chair. "Darling!"

Dorn's grin deepened. "Looks as though I finally made it, angel—made it for keeps. That damn laboratory burned down. I've got a hunch Limpus will give up now."

"Limpus has passed through the veil. Oh, darling! I'm so glad to see you. I'll get you a cup of coffee and I'll tell you all about it."

"Gosh—I want to kiss you," Dorn said. "I never wanted to kiss anyone so badly in all my life."

"Go ahead—I'll try—"

DORN SHOOK his head impatiently. "Let's not go into that. And the hell with coffee. I want a drink. Have you ever had a drink, or do you live on java?"

"Anything you say, darling."

They went to a cocktail lounge and took two Martinis off a passing waiter's tray. They sat in a secluded corner and Dorn lifted his glass. "To you, angel."

"To you, darling."

They drank.

"Let me tell you about Limpus. Just as he brought you back to life in that laboratory, he fell and broke his neck or something on the edge of the table. He passed through the veil immediately and I had a bad time with him."

"What did he do?"

"Nothing, really. His instincts died fast. But he was still odious, so I sent him away."

"Where did you send him?"

"Oh, far far away. It will take him a long time to get back. I've a feeling we've seen the last of him."

"That doesn't make me feel bad. Now, it's just you and me."

"You and me," Sally said dreamily. Then she looked up at Dorn with a strange light in her eyes.

"Dorn."

"Yes, angel."

"Kiss me."

"Huh?"

"I said kiss me."

"Well, all right, but—"

The next thing he said was, "Holy smoke." A little while later he said, "Holy smoke," again.

Finally, they came up for air.

"I liked that," Sally said. "I liked it a lot. I can't understand how I've been so stupid, so—so half dead."

Dorn glanced down at the empty cocktail glasses. "Do you suppose . . . ?"

"I don't know. Maybe."

He took her close into his arms. "Darling, how do people get married on this plane?"

Sally wrinkled her snub nose in thought. "I don't know. I guess they just consider themselves married. I don't know of any other way."

"Wonderful, darling. I'm tired. Let's go back to the Belford Plaza. Sort of a honeymoon."

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THE NEXT morning they had breakfast in bed and Sally didn't bother to pull up the sheet. Neither did Dorn. After breakfast they got dressed and went to Paris. It was a heavenly trip with lots of liquor sitting on tables on the sidewalk.

They stayed at the Hotel de Paree that night. The following morning Dorn said, "Darling, I guess I'm beginning to get the swing of things on this plane, starting to conform. I want to go to my funeral."

"I think that would be very nice. I'd like to go myself."

"Then we'd better get started."

They arrived in Stonegate just as the procession was drawing up in front of the church. Mourners in black were getting out of the cars behind the flower van.

"Lot's of flowers," Sally said. "It's a lovely funeral."

"Let's go inside and have a last look at me."

They went into the church and walked up the aisle. The casket stood before the altar rail, a line of silent people passing before it.

"Funny," Dorn said. "I don't see Vicky or the children."

"Maybe she's late."

They moved toward the casket, stepped close, looked down at the still head on the white satin.

Dorn gasped. "Holy John! It's not me. It's Felix."

There was an audible sigh. "Yeah, it's me. How are you, Dorn?"

"Felix! What on earth! What happened to you?"

"I passed through the veil. If you're looking for your own funeral, you're too late. They buried you yesterday. It was a hurry-up job."

"But you— How did it happen?"

"My conscience had a lot to do with it. That nine thousand dollars I stole from you. It began to get me. I couldn't sleep."

"Then why didn't you put it back? Nobody would have known the difference."

"It was too late. I wanted to get rich and I bought a lot of stock—worthless stock."

"That was silly. Why didn't you get my advice? I'm pretty smart when it comes to the stock market."

Sally pulled his sleeve. "Really, Dorn—"

"Oh, that's right. He couldn't very well. But worthless stock didn't kill—"

Felix smiled. "I went for a ride in the country. As I said, my conscience was bothering me. I wasn't paying too much attention to the road. It wasn't suicide exactly—just carelessness."

Dorn pointed a finger. "Who's that?"

FELIX turned and drew a girl into the foreground. She had been standing rearward, partially behind him. She had an exceptionally bright aura. Felix smiled. He brightened perceptibly as he looked at the girl.

"This is Molly. She found me walking down the street in sort of a daze. She took me under her wing, so to speak."

The girl smiled. She looked at Dorn and then at Sally. "Have you been here long?" she asked of the latter.

"About four years," Sally said. "And you?"

"Not quite that long."

Felix was holding her arm with an air of possession. He looked at Dorn and winked. Dorn regarded him pensively.

"Do you two have any plans?" Sally asked.

"None except to get better acquainted," Felix said, as he put an arm around Molly's waist.

"We're planning on going to Florida," Sally said.

"That will be nice."

"Well," Felix said, "guess we'll be

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running along. Maybe we'll see you around."

"Hope so."

They turned away. Felix hesitated. "Dorn—you aren't sore about the nine thousand, are you?"

"Of course not, old man. Think nothing of it. Nothing at all."

"Thanks. Thanks a lot." Felix winked again. "Guess I'll be getting on with my romance." They moved toward the door.

"Life was never like this," Felix called back gaily. Then they went out into the street.

Dorn stood silent, looking after them. Finally he said, "Poor Felix. He hasn't found out yet. He's due for a surprise."

"You mean about...instincts?"

"What else? Felix wouldn't have found out yet. He's a very slow worker with figures that walk around. His specialty was figures you put on paper."

"Do you suppose we ought to tell them about...Martinis?"

Dorn shook his head. "No, angel. For all we know, it might be a sin. You wouldn't want to lead them astray, would you?"

"Of course not?"

Sally smiled and hugged Dorn's arm. "Darling—let's go to Florida. You visualize. Visualize a palm tree. That ought to do it."

Dorm visualized as directed, but it landed them in a cozy booth in the Tropical Club next to a potted palm.

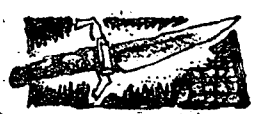
Sally smiled happily. "You missed, darling. You'll have to try again."

"Okay. But let's have a Martini first."

So they did.

THE END

Hail The Absent King



By PETER DAKIN

TO ARTHUR EVANS—English gentleman, scholar and authority on Ancient Greece, and keeper of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford—belongs the credit for the unearthing of the palace of Minos. He arrived in Crete at the end of the 19th century searching for examples of Cretan writing. His wanderings over Crete led him to the ancient site of Cnossos. Here, everything he had ever heard about Minos and Daedalus and the Labyrinth was recalled to him, and he was seized with the desire to attempt the search for the palace of King Minos.

The digging started in 1900, and almost immediately results began to show. First the remains of walls began to appear, and after nine weeks there were two acres of a vast prehistoric building. As a matter of fact, it took over a quarter of a century of digging, studying and labor before the main building and its dependencies were finally completed.

From the outside, it was about as simple as a palace could be. But inside it was an endless succession of corridors and chambers in the most complicated maze. Of comfort and luxury and elegance and beauty, there were plenty. One of the greatest thrills of the excavation at Cnossos was the discovery of the throne room. This room was still very much as it had been in its prime—the high-backed gypsum throne against the wall, the stone benches on which the counselors had sat flanking the throne on either side and along three sides of the room. The fourth side of the room opened into an ante-room, while an opening in the wall opposite the anteroom led to an inner chamber which was a shrine of the Great Mother Goddess of Crete.

Small and simple, the throne room still showed signs of having at one time been a breathtakingly beautiful room. Pale etchings of vivid paintings were still discernible on the walls, and among the trash that littered the floor could be found small decorative pieces of porcelain and crystal.

To Evans, history became the present, and he wanted this room to live again. He hired an artist to restore the wall paintings, and had the room put back into shape. Now, a frieze covers the upper part of the walls, showing a rocky scene and brilliantly colored griffins. Two of the griffins seem to guard either side of the entrance to the shrine of the Mother Goddess, and two face the throne on either side, seeming to keep watch over the king.

Beautiful, with luxurious grandeur, the room today looks much as it used to in the days when a king sat on the throne and life went on in daily measure.

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Loving Cup 450 B. C.

ACCORDING TO Herodotus—the father and first of all historians—who lived from 484 BC to 425 B. C., the citizens of Scythia were a people who make the most uncivilized tribes of our day seem as nothing.

They had some habits which make one grateful that they are just to be read about—not to be experienced. A Scythian in battle drank the blood of the first man he killed. He would cut off the heads of the rest of his victims and share them with his king.

They would make a cut around the head above the ears and shake out the skull. The scalp was then hung from the bridle-rein and used, delicately enough, as a napkin. If the warring Scythian had had a particularly good period, he had enough scalps to sew together to make a cloak.

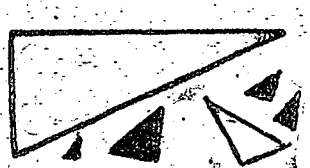
The skin of a man is thick and glossy and whiter than other hides, so the Scythians often flayed the right arms of their dead enemies, tanned the skins, with the nails still hanging to them, and used them as covering for their arrows.

Among their less likeable habits was this one: they would take the skull of a man they intensely disliked, saw off the portion below the eyebrows, clean out the inside, cover the outside with leather, and use it as a drinking cup. Occasionally, if it was a particularly fine-looking skull and would make a nice-sized cup, they would line the inside with gold, to make it look especially fancy.

I'll take my wine from a glass!

Russell Newton Roman

IT CAN HAPPEN HERE!



By John Weston

IT WAS dark along the Atlantic Coast in this part of Massachusetts, but the men landing from the small boat knew their business. Despite the bulk of the trunk they were handling so gingerly they managed to put it ashore without any trouble. Once it was ashore it was a simple job to transfer it to the waiting truck whose shrouded headlights made it just a soft purring sound in the utter blackness.

Within minutes the truck with the men in the back along with their precious trunk were rolling down the highway toward New York. Once in the big city the truck unerringly found its way toward Times Square and, despite the bustle of the late evening traffic, the men managed to unload the trunk and its contents on the sidewalk. In a matter of minutes they'd brought the trunk to the platform of the subway....

Who were these men? Did this really happen?

Yes, it happened all right, but the men were only newspaper reporters and the trunk was empty!

In an effort to test the so-called increased vigilance of the country against the violence of saboteurs sneaking an atomic bomb ashore, the newsmen deliberately chose to land an empty trunk at the same spot where Nazi saboteurs came ashore in the last war. The Nazis, incidentally, were apprehended and shot. From the time the boat was off shore to the time the newsmen deposited the trunk in the subway station near Times Square, no one even questioned them, much less made an attempt at apprehending them. With perfect calmness they pursued their task, hampered neither by the military, the Coast Guard nor civilian police!

This amazing demonstration serves to focus all eyes on the vulnerability of the United States to the potentialities of atomic warfare. Supposing the men had been Soviet agents and suppose the trunk had contained a bomb—whether the trunk was too small or not is merely academic. What could be done with that could be done with more elaborate equipment. This strange event shocks and horrifies us—bringing home to us the realization that we are so exposed.

Congress right now is toying with rules to prevent such things from happening. A law is in the making requiring the elaborate exploration and examination of every foreign ship. But will this help much in the future?

It is not science-fiction to say that the U. S. could be planted with atomic bombs from one end to the other by a determined enemy. We must prevent this or else we are lost. Does the future show a blackened, burnt-out United States? God forbid! The most insidious form of warfare involves the spy and the agent—yet this is the sort of thing we are likely to face. We must be prepared to defeat it!

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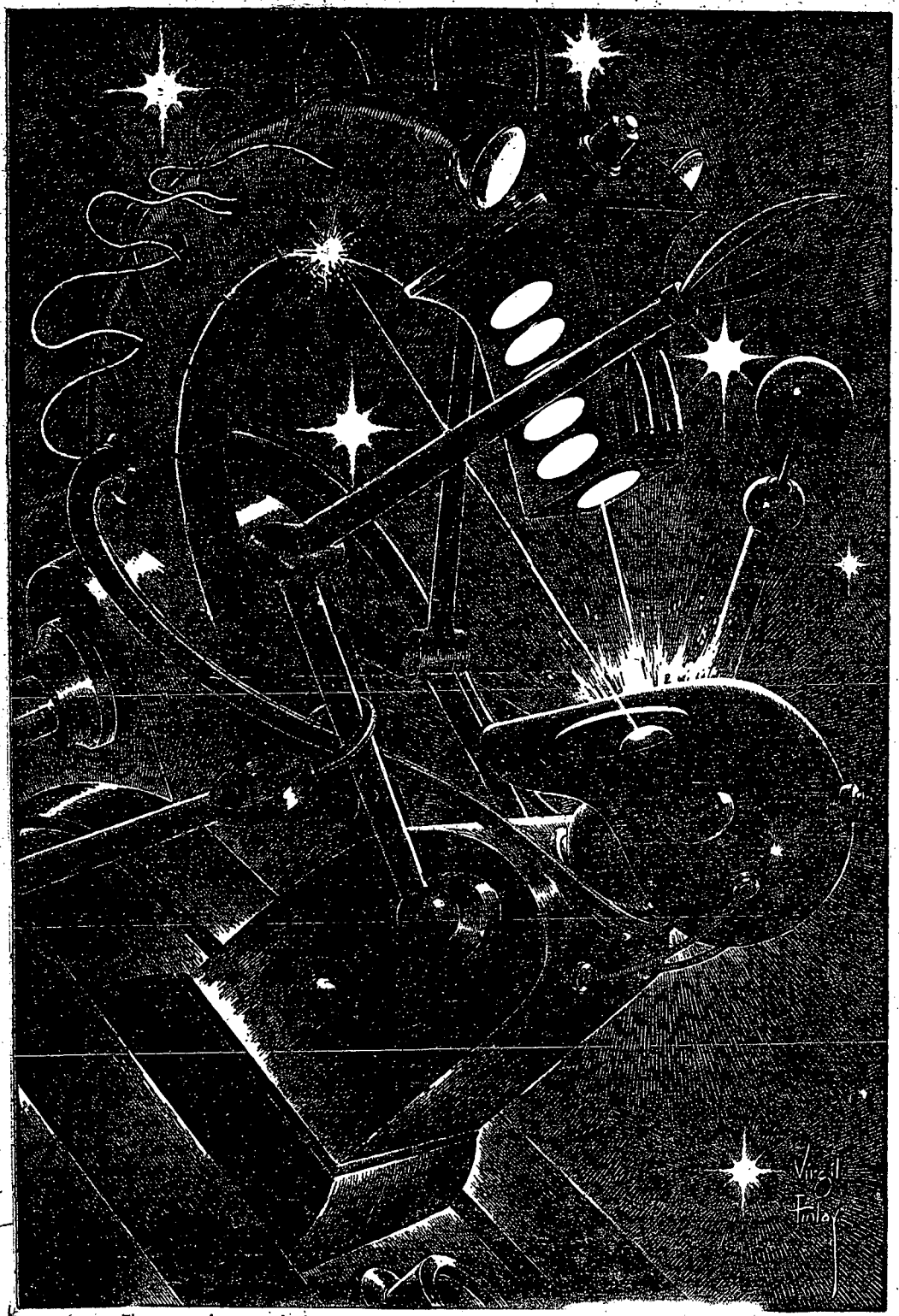

The two robots crashed together, and the sound seemed to roar over the world

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Anything Your Heart Desires

By STEPHEN MARLOWE

They wished for wealth, power, love. And their desires were granted. But then they wanted more—and the Martian god laughed

MURCHISON blinked hard to clear the burning, stinging sweat from his eyes. "Stop shooting your mouth off and let me think," he said. "I can't help it if we're lost."

Kincaid grimaced, fingering the stock of his blasting rifle. "Don't give me any excuses," he told the guide. "We didn't pay you to get us lost in this stinking red desert. We paid you to find a herd of guru beasts so we could do some hunting."

"I don't think you understand. We're lost. L-o-s-t. All I want to do is find our way back to Canal City. The hell with your guru beasts."

"They said you were the best damned guide in the Syrtis Major."

"I get by. But Mars ain't anybody's backyard. Not yet. There's a mess of wilderness out here north of Canal City, and if you're lost you forget all about hunting. You concentrate on just trying to live, and sometimes it ain't easy."

"Christ! We should have hired a native Martian. He'd have known his way around."

"Sure," Murchison smiled. "He'd probably have slit your throat and taken your money. I've seen it happen. Martians don't like Earthmen."

"And what the hell do you think you are?"

"That's different. I'm just trying to make a living, and they don't mind me. But you guys who come poking your noses around their sacred ruins and call them animated walking sticks to their faces, they don't like you."

"Forget it," Elena Kincaid pleaded, joining them. "If Mr. Murchison says we're lost, we're lost. Can you get us out, Mr. Murchison?"

Murchison shrugged his shoulders, but the woman's husband said: "Oh Lord, not you too!"

"I'm just trying to be sensible."

"Sensible? You've been making eyes at Murchison ever since we left Canal City."

"Please, Alan. You're acting mean because we're lost."

He ignored her. "Go ahead, Murchison, deny it. Hasn't she been making eyes at you?"

"No," said Murchison. He turned his back and stalked away, crouching over their pile of gear and sorting it into two heaps. One heap was much larger than the other, and it contained the expensive cameras, hunting clothing, fancy hand weapons, all the excess baggage.

"What do you think you're doing?" Kincaid demanded.

"We can't take all this junk with

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us. I'm sorting out what's necessary."

"That stuff costs money."

"From what I heard," Murchison told him blandly, "you're swimming in money."

"Don't get insolent, Murchison." Kincaid placed a soft hand on the guide's shoulder, but there was surprising strength behind it. "Put that gear back together again."

MURCHISON sat down in the ochre sand, lacing his long fingers behind his head. "Okay. You find the way out of here."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just this. I give orders, all the orders. My neck's in this with yours, Kincaid. I'd like to get it out. Is that clear?"

"No!" Kincaid roared. "You're an inept, snotty—"

Murchison's lanky frame sprang up from the sand like an oversized dart. He grasped the collar of Kincaid's shirt with both his hands, shaking the man until his teeth rattled. "Is this clear?"

Kincaid swung his right fist up, but Murchison caught it and twisted until his employer bellowed.

Softly, Elena Kincaid was laughing. "You know, he's done that to me more than once, Mr. Murchison. Just what you're doing now. But that's enough. You'll give the orders, and I'll triple your pay if you pull us out of this."

"You'll triple it?" her husband snorted.

"That's what I said, Alan. It's my money, not yours. Now, shut up. Mr. Murchison, do you think I'm pretty?"

God, Murchison thought. *What a pair to be stuck out here with. No, you scrawny, flat-chested, washed-out checkbook of a dame, you're not pretty. Your husband married you for your money, he got hitched to you because he recognized a meal-ticket when he saw one. Sure, I lied before. You've been making eyes at me. You'd make eyes at the two Martian moons if you thought they'd tell you you had looks to go with your money. As for you, Mr. Kincaid, you'll listen now, because your wife will start dangling that pocketbook just out of reach if you don't. God, what a mess....*

They left the discarded equipment behind, a shining mound in the sunlight. They staggered ahead through the shifting, wind-blown sands, the heat beating down like an oppressive blanket. Murchison smiled in spite of himself. Before man came to Mars, he pictured a frozen world where the cold would probe its icy fingers through half a dozen layers of the best insulation. Oh, that happened at night, all right, but during the long equatorial day the sun burned down through an atmosphere too thin to offer much protection, and the Gobi Desert was an oasis by comparison.

AN HOUR before sunset, they sighted the ruins over the low-sweeping dunes which faded away to the horizon in all directions. Gaunt and ruby red in the fading sunlight, the long-dead city beckoned them.

"We're lucky," Murchison grunted. "Generally, those cities extend underground, so we'll be warm. I'd hate to think what it'd have been like out on the sands tonight."

"Well," said Kincaid, "no one asked you to leave our aircar behind."

Murchison ignored the remark, but Kincaid's wife said: "Don't be ridiculous. The aircar broke down. Sure, we could've had warmth there, but we'd also have starved to death. Mr. Murchison, will we find life in the city?"

"No," he assured her. "Maybe the Marties come here on religious pilgrimages once a year, maybe they don't. But the city's dead. Probably it's been that way since before your

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ancestors came down from their trees."

As it turned out, Murchison was right. They entered the city through a chink in its ancient stone walls, the twilight desert winds knifing in behind them. For a time they explored around among the ruins of a civilization which died before it reached the stars, leaving the uncultured Marties as its heirs.

Soon Murchison flicked on their hand torch, and it cut a pale swath through the night. Mars' thin atmosphere lost its daylight fast, once the sun set, and the icy night winds knifed in through the city's broken walls. "We'd better find our way underground," Murchison said.

He didn't wait for an answer, stalking ahead of the Kincaids through an ancient archway, probing around with the beam of his torch. The archway opened on what had been a great courtyard, and all around them the gaunt shadows of Martian buildings which might be as old as the desert itself loomed mysteriously.

Murchison found what he sought, calling the Kincaids to follow him as he ducked down into a pit at the center of the courtyard. They went down a twisting staircase hewn out of the living rock, and it was a long time before they reached bottom.

Elena Kincaid gasped, "Why, it's—it's light down here!"

"Of course," her husband said, crossing to the far wall and running his hands over it. "Look at the wall—it glows."

MURCHISON NODDED. "Radioactive," he told them, then laughed when Kincaid withdrew his hands as from fire. "Don't worry," the guide explained. "The old Martians couldn't stand radioactivity any more than we could. There's just enough in the walls to give light and a little heat. But you could spend your whole life down here and you wouldn't get a dangerous dose."

Kincaid shook his head. "Well, I wish we had a Geiger counter."

"I said you don't need it."

"You said. You said! Listen Murchison, you got us into this, and—"

Here we go again, Murchison thought grimly, and he hardly listened when Kincaid went into his tirade. Instead, he studied the chamber in which they found themselves. The staircase came in through a hole in one of the three walls, and there seemed no other means of egress. Three walls. The room was a huge triangular vault, and Murchison eyed the walls keenly. Equilateral, he figured. Each wall the same length, perhaps fifty feet. Each of its three corners—the angles of the triangle—sixty degrees.

Murchison licked his dry lips. He'd heard stories about the ancient Martian cults, about a lost science which died when the red planet took on the color which gave it its name, an age ago. And in every story the triangular vault took on special significance, coupled with a two-line fragment from an ancient chant. What was it? Murchison tried to remember, mumbled to himself, "Anything your heart desires, food or drink or gem of fires—"

"What say?" Elena Kincaid demanded.

Murchison grunted something noncommittal, went on with his thinking. No one had ever found one of the triangular vaults, not even the degenerate Marties. But the Marties stumbled through the shifting red sands of the desert, looking for them, saying that their civilization would be born anew when one of the vaults turned up....

Murchison shrugged. Hell, probably just a fancy myth with no more meaning that any one of dozens of similar myths on Earth. Even the three an-

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gles of the triangle might be explained by the Freudian school of psychology. The mystical number three. . .

THE VOICE changed his mind. Grating, metallic, it seemed to emerge from one of the walls. It carried somehow a feeling of hoary age. "Welcome to the vault of the three-sided abstraction, the deity Kron!"

"Hey!" Kincaid barked. "Did you hear that?"

Murchison nodded, and the woman said: "It spoke in English. In English! How can that be, Murchison?"

"Don't ask me. On Venus there are talking trees which speak more in the mind than any place else, using the language of the listener. Sort of like telephathy." Murchison tried to brush it off that way, but he felt oddly frightened. Voices just don't talk to you, not in million-year-old Martian cities, not in your own language.

The voice droned on. "Fair Mars is dying, and the three-sided abstraction which is a deity only for the superstitious will provide for its children. You have only to wish—wish for anything your heart desires here in the vault of the three angles. You will notice that one angle is red, one is blue, one is yellow."

Murchison stared, saw it was true. Each of the room's three corners had a different color—bright red, somber blue, pale yellow.

The voice had not yet finished. "The blue angle is for dreaming. Wish an abstraction there, and you will dream it. The red is for reality. Demand a particular there, and you will receive it. Dream wisely, demand sagely, for Mars is dying. . . ."

The voice faded. A lot of hogwash, naturally. An old fanatic cult which couldn't reconcile itself to the death of a planet. But why hadn't the voice mentioned the yellow corner?

". . . ridiculous," Kincaid was saying. "What I want to know is this: how the devil are we going to get out of here?"

"We'll wait until dawn," Murchison told him. "Then we'll burn this whole darned city, if necessary, to make a signal. Don't worry, they'll find us."

"Okay. Okay, it sounds good. Meanwhile, I'm thirsty, and hungry."

Elena Kincaid had skipped jauntily into the red corner, her plain features looking almost ugly in the harsh light. "Well, what was it the voice said? Red for reality. I demand food—and drink."

Silence. Then, from somewhere far away, a rustling sound. Softly at first, then louder. Murchison felt his jaw grow slack. Elena Kincaid crouched in her corner, terrified, surrounded on all sides by savory dishes, by flagons of wine and water!

Murchison felt his salivary glands working overtime; he hadn't realized how hungry he was. And you don't go around rejecting an obvious impossibility, not when it offers you food and drink!

THEY SQUATTED in silence, the three of them, eating. Murchison dug in with gusto, only half aware that the roast meat did not quite taste like beef, that the vegetables and fruits had a strange but delicious tang to them, that the wine's color was a deep purple. Synthetics, obviously. Stuff like this didn't exist on Mars, not now. Perhaps long and long ago, in the dead past of the planet. Perhaps then, but not now. And only one conclusion could be drawn: synthetics, yes—but based upon the flora and fauna of the old Mars which had been dust a million years. . . .

When they finished, Kincaid didn't have a word of complaint. A handsome man who had attracted the plain but wealthy Elena, only his petulant mouth and too-bright eyes showed

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weakness. But the lips trembled now, and the eyes stared fixedly, as if trying to penetrate the secret of the vault. "Imagine," he mused. "That voice wasn't fooling! Anything we want—anything—right here for the taking. Like a Djinn of Earth fairy tale, only this is based on science!" He stood up, bathed himself in the scarlet glow of the red corner. "I want jewels," he said. "Jewels, jewels, jewels—"

The stirring again, the rustling.

Kincaid let the rubies run through his fingers, tossed the handfuls of diamonds into the air, caught them, fondled the emeralds and sapphires.

"See?" he babbled. "See, see?"

Murchison saw. A fortune in uncut gems, fresh from their matrix. Kincaid didn't waste any time. He gazed scornfully at the plain features of his wife, this woman upon whom he'd depended for his wealth. He said, "Naturally, I'll want a divorce when we get back." Just like that.

"You'll what?" Elena Kincaid demanded.

"I'll want a divorce, of course. What do I need you for? What do I need anything for? I have this, don't I?"

The woman sobbed softly, but then she looked up, and she was smiling. "Not you alone," she said. "You're not the only one who has it." She went herself into the red corner, said: "I want beauty, I want to be more beautiful than any woman in the solar system."

Somehow, he did not know why, Murchison had no desire to join them. Kincaid always had coveted wealth and power—he'd have these now. And Elena—she carried her plainness around like a wound which would not heal, and so first she asked for beauty. Now Murchison sat in the middle of the room, watching them, playing the role of an impersonal observer. He wondered how long he could maintain it.

Elena . . . changed. Murchison didn't see the change. The rustling came, and with it a cone of brilliant amber radiance which cloaked the woman from head to foot. Other colors flashed through the cone, caressing the dim shadow which was Elena. Murchison thought he heard the woman scream, but the cone maintained a shrieking clamor of its own, and he couldn't be sure.

The cone faded.

MOUSEY HAIR hair swept back into a bun, sallow, pinched-out features, flat, uninspiring figure, thin legs—all were gone. Elena stood there, head tilted back, the glorious cascade of golden hair billowing halfway down her back, full red lips parted invitingly, breasts arched proudly, haughtily, long bronzed legs flashing as she pirouetted around the room after she stood for one moment and let their eyes take her in. This was the new Elena, fashioned not by a deity, Murchison knew now, but by a long-perished science.

Kincaid ran to her, reached out with his hands, but she eluded him. "Keep away!" she cried.

"Keep away? But you're my wife!"

She laughed, a musical sound. "You didn't want me, remember? You wanted a divorce. Very well, I'll grant it. Meanwhile, keep away."

"Elena—"

Still laughing, she skipped across the room to Murchison. "Do you like me?"

The guide's pulses were hammering furiously. Like her? The way she looked now, she'd make an octogenarian chase her around the solar system in a life-jet. "I—I think you are very beautiful."

"You may kiss me, Murchison." Red lips parting, waiting—sure, she'd had a crush on him from the very first, Murchison knew that. And now it

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could be a two-way proposition, despite the fact that Kincaid bellowed his rage. Hell, he could take care of Kincaid, soft, dissipated Kincaid. And this woman, this new Elena... Still, did he hear laughter, far away, through the walls of the room—an ancient voice mocking him? Did he?

He stepped away from the woman, feeling like all the varieties of a damned fool wrapped into one.

She did not pout. Instead, she laughed. "What's the difference? There'll be hundreds, thousands; I'll have the men of the solar system at my feet. No, Alan. Keep away. Away!"

She spoke like you might talk to a pet which refused to obey, and then struck out at her husband, slapping his face once with her left hand and once with her right. When he snarled and balled his fist, Murchison got between them. "That's enough," he said. "We still have to get out of here."

Kincaid relaxed visibly. "What's your hurry?" he said. "I don't feel like leaving this place. You can go when morning comes, if you want, but I'll stay right here. Oh, I'll leave eventually, but first—ah, what did the voice say? You can dream in the blue corner? Well, I will dream for a time."

He walked stiffly into the area of blue light, stood still for a moment, then said: "I want a dream of power. Any kind of power..."

He slumped to the floor.

Elena smiled demurely at Murchison.

LATER, KINCAID awoke. "Lord, what a dream."

"Very well, tell us about it." Elena yawned indifferently.

"Well, I was— I wasn't me! I was some kind of contraption, a robot, I guess, sliding on runners atop a big tank-like machine. Another robot faced me, like a dragon made out of metal. We fought. Voices shouted in my head, told me this dragon thing was the strongest creature in—what was the word?—in the galaxy. We fought, and I won. I can't describe the feeling, but I was like a god after the fight. I pounded my metal chest and the sound it made roared out all over the world. And people bowed and scraped their noses in the dirt before me. I let them kiss my metal arms..."

He chuckled. "Hell, while we're here I might as well enjoy myself with dreams like that. But I'll take more than enough out of this place to have the real thing. Power! What's power but a lot of wealth, used properly? I'll have everything. And you, Elena, you'll come crawling to me like all the others. You'll see—"

"My, how you've changed," Elena scoffed. "You used to say you loved me. Murchison, would you believe that he said it every night for a year until even I began to tire of it? Lies, all lies—and now, well, I'll have a hundred men to tell me that. But," she smiled, almost sadly, "none of them will mean it. Alan wanted my money. All the others will want my beauty. Even you, Murchison—no, don't deny it. If only I could have one man, one man as handsome as I am beautiful, who will love me always, deeply, sincerely...."

"I love you!" Kincaid said.

The woman ignored him, crossed to the red corner. "I want a human being, a glorious hunk of man, an Adonis in the flesh. And he must love me to the exclusion of all other emotions. Give him to me!"

"She's crazy," Kincaid muttered, playing with his jewels.

MURCHISON watched the amber cone return, hovering over emptiness. When it faded, a man stood there, a personification of the old tall-

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dark-and-handsome cliche. "Which one of you is Elena?" he demanded in a mellow baritone.

Elena smiled. "Suppose you figure that out for yourself."

"You are. Yes..." He swept her up in his arms.

"Oh, Lord!" Kincaid groaned. Jealousy flashed briefly in his eyes, and he forgot his jewels. He spun the handsome man around, but his fingers caught in the lapel of the man's trim white suit, and Murchison heard the cloth rip.

The man shook his head. "You shouldn't have done that. I must look my best for the woman I love—"

"Oh, shut up!" Kincaid cried, still holding the torn lapel. "You're not even real. They took a lot of chemicals and made you, that's all. Now, stop pawing my wife."

"Please," the man said.

"I told you to stop pawing her."

"Please."

"Nuts!" Kincaid let go of the lapel and swung clumsily with his right fist. The man caught the blow on his open palm, shoving Kincaid back. He tripped and fell, and when he got up he was bellowing again.

"Really," the artificial man told him, "this is regrettable. You're keeping me from my work." He shoved once more, this time harder, and Kincaid crashed into the wall. He got up slowly, and Murchison tried to hold him back.

"Stop it, Kincaid. Use your head. That thing was created to love your wife, and it won't let anything interfere."

"Yeah? Well, no bunch of chemicals is going to love my wife. Hey, you, get away!"

Shaking his head sadly, the artificial man hit Kincaid, a hard blow which caught the point of his jaw and lifted him half off the floor. He sat down hard, and for a few moments he did not try to get up. When he did, he took out a handkerchief and patted his bleeding lips, then lurched across the room to the red corner.

"Give me a blasting pistol!" he pleaded. Murchison had left the hunting rifle behind on the desert.

Out of his corner wheeled Kincaid, the pistol clutched in his fist. "Okay, you, get away from her!"

The artificial man turned to face him, blanched when he saw the weapon. "Please, no violence. I want to love—"

Kincaid shot him through the chest.

HE STAGGERED, and now Elena was screaming, because although he should have been a corpse, the artificial man staggered around the room after her, his arms outstretched.

Kincaid shot again, and the thing stumbled to its knees. "Please, I want to love—"

Again, and the artificial man shuddered, lay on the floor trembling. "Don't you understand? I can't die. I can only love. Love Elena..."

Murchison wrenched the pistol from Kincaid's nerveless fingers. "Let's get the hell out of here!" he roared. He looked at the thing on the floor, broken and twisted but not dead, and he felt sick.

"You killed him!" Elena wailed, striking at Kincaid's chest with her fists. He brushed her away, ran to the red corner. "Make that thing disappear!"

It disappeared.

"See?" Kincaid said, trembling. "N-nothing to worry about."

Elena stood in the red glow, pointing to her husband. "Kill him! Destroy him!"

Murchison knew it was a mistake. The science of the vault could do anything you demanded, but it didn't concern itself with the method. Kincaid's dream of power might have been one

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an old Martian could understand. Kincaid certainly had not understood it, and he'd tired of it soon enough.

Now the vault had been given an order: destroy Kincaid. It could do that, but no one had bothered to stipulate how. So the room would decide for itself....

Murchison heard a rumbling, looked up and saw rock dust sifting down from the ceiling. A crack appeared, spreading ominously. The rock grumbled.

A half-ton chunk detached itself and fell.

Kincaid screamed once, horribly, shielded himself futilely with his hands. Then the rock hit the floor with a booming crash, and Kincaid was under it.

Smaller stones fell. More cracks opened in the ceiling. The dust made it hard for Murchison to breathe.

He took Elena by her arm, cried: "This whole place will cave in! We'll have to make a run for those stairs!"

She pulled herself away from him. "Don't be foolish. All I have to do is stand again in the red corner, and tell them to stop. See—"

She skirted the slab of rock which was her husband's tombstone. Dimly through the clatter of rocks Murchison was aware of her sobbing. Perhaps at the very end, she realized what she had done. Perhaps...

He hardly had time to think. The first rock had started a fault in the ceiling, and once the thing was set in motion it wouldn't stop until the entire vault was buried. Something slammed against Murchison's shoulder, staggering him. He fell, picked himself up, saw that Elena had reached the red corner. A crack slit the ceiling over her head, and Murchison tried to shout a warning, tried to run at her across the rock-strewn floor.

He didn't make it.

A score of boulders thundered down, forming a cairn for Elena.

MURCHISON plunged toward the stairs, tripped and fell. When he got up a fresh fall of rock had sealed his path to the exit. He flung himself about the room wildly.

The red corner—gone, buried under a dozen tons of rock. The same for the blue. Murchison backed away as the rocks pelted down.

He crouched in the yellow corner, and the metallic voice came back, sadly this time.

"It never works, does it? I'm only a robot here in these walls. And I—I can die. I will die when the rocks finish their bombing. Ten vaults—ten of these vaults all over Mars, built a million years ago to give the people what nature had taken from them.

"The people did not know how to use their gift. Greed, avarice, trickery—each had his own idea how to use the power. Nine vaults are gone. This is the tenth, and I am dying...."

Murchison hardly heard over the clatter of stones.

"You who have watched this night, you were not responsible. You merely watched, while others acted foolishly. For you, one more wish. Anything you want. But just one. I am weak, weak...."

Thoughts flashed through Murchison's delirium. Riches? Power? A final dream to combine all the raptures obtainable through an unknown science? He laughed insanely when he remembered the old legends of Earth. Three wishes, or four, or whatever number. But in the end you had to be content with something simple, and it was exactly as if the wishes had never existed...

The Martians had not known how to use their power any more than the men of Earth.

"Better get me out of here," Murchison said wearily. "Put me in Canal

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City... That's about all...."

HE STOOD on the quay near the old canal, radiant heat from the artificial sidewalks pushing back the cold of night. People moved about on all sides of him, gay, carefree people, enjoying night-life in Canal City....

His memories were hazy. He'd been on the desert with the Kincaids. Now he was back. The Kincaids—dead. He knew that, without knowing how. He'd have some explaining to do to the authorities, but it would turn out all right. He knew it would. And meanwhile he'd better stop into Kelly's Marsport Bar and have a few stiff shots. Something told him his memories might return, and then he'd need those drinks.

THE END

Clothes Still ... Make The Woman

EVEN BACK in the early Greek days, her wardrobe had always been a source of pleasure and problem to woman.

The early Greek woman, of course, could not charge her gowns at Bonwit Teller's. She fashioned them herself on her loom. The styles were very simple. The principal garment—the *chiton*—was dress length, about six feet wide by eleven feet long. There was no cutting and no wastage of material. The Dorian *chiton* was made by taking the length of material and folding it over about a quarter of its width. It was then arranged and fastened on the shoulders by brooches, from which the material fell into folds. The open side was not sewn up, but was secured by a girdle at the waist, and the material pulled out and pouched over the girdle.

Early in the sixth century B. C., an expedition which Athens had sent to Aegina met with disaster. Only one survivor returned. The bereaved wives gathered round the lone returning hero shouting, "Where is my husband?", "How did he die?", and striking him with the brooches by which their gowns were fastened. The man died of wounds received in this one-sided battle.

The Athenians were so horrified, they changed the style of their women's dress from the Dorian type, which required brooches, to the Ionian linen tunic, which was sewn. The Ionian *chiton* was more like a dress. The width was about four feet six inches, and the length twice the span of the arms. The material was folded and sewn, leaving holes for the head and arms, and falling into folds. It was then girdled and pouched. Under the *chiton* the women may have worn a slip and perhaps a broad belt to support the figure. At that, it must have been more comfortable than the "corset" era. *E. Bruce Yaches*

"LADY OF THE DOUBLE-AX"

By Wilton Avery MacDonald

THE KINGS of Cnossos were priests as well as kings; hence their palaces were also temples. The shrine of the Great Mother Goddess adjoining the throne room was the Holy of Holies. But opening out of the same side of the central court were two small connecting rooms. In the center of each of these there was a pillar made of four blocks, and each block was inscribed with the emblem of the Great Minoan Goddess—the sign of the Labrys or Double-Ax.

This emblem appeared oftener on the palace walls than all other marks put together. It was found on the walls, on blocks, on pottery, on seals, wherever it was at all possible to get it on. In fact, Arthur Evans dubbed the great goddess "Lady of the Double-Ax"—in commemoration of the popularity of her emblem.

Worship of the Divine Lady must have been an important part of palace life. The throne room was obviously designed for religious use, and a large part of the west wing of the palace was filled with shrines. But there is no doubt that the Minoan religion was not a somber one, that its people did not worry about life after death. Pleasure in living, beauty, comfort—indications of these fill the palace. Brilliant colors were most often used; all the objects, even the practical ones, were beautiful. Even the king's gameboard was a glorious design of gold and silver, ivory and crystal.

There is no doubt that these were a happy, dancing people, who probably worshipped gaiety as well as the Mother Goddess.

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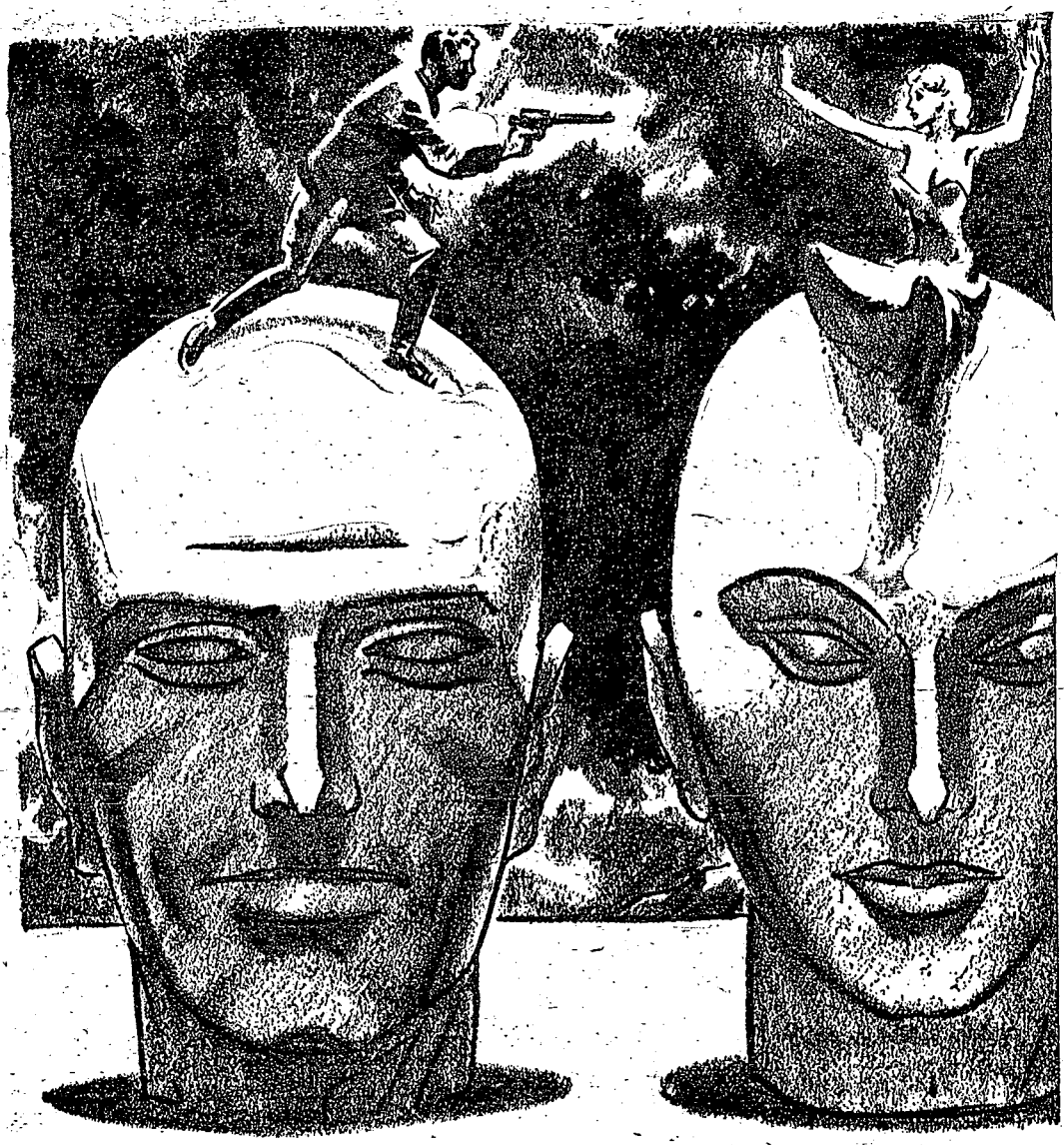

The Girl In The

By Chester S. Geier

If beautiful hair is a girl's crowning glory, it was now obvious that Zelda Jardine had been gloriously crowned . . .

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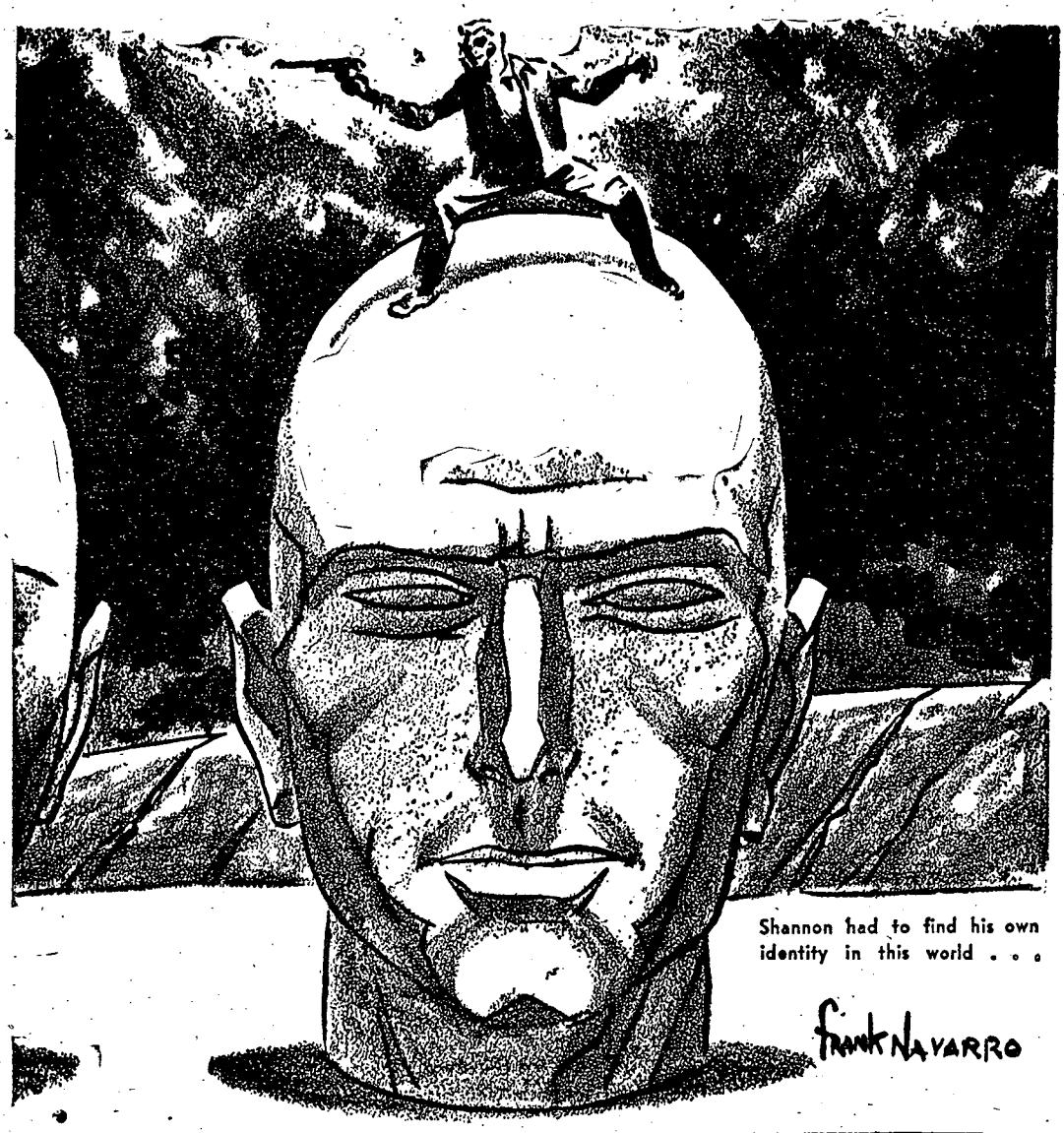

Shannon had to find his own identity in this world . . .

FRANK NAVARRO

Golden Wig

THE SIDEWALK stretched away with an eerie desertion and quiet under the street lamps, one segment of the concrete labyrinth that was the sleeping city—a labyrinth that for Shannon had no particular beginning and no particular end. And in a horribly real sense he was lost in it.

He walked with his head down and

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his big hands thrust deep into the pockets of his trenchcoat, his teeth set hard on the stem of the unlighted pipe between his lips. He felt restless and driven, yet without purpose, somehow haunted. A man goaded by impulses he could not explain, by urges he found baffling and unfathomable. A man lost. A man from nowhere, going nowhere.

His mouth twisted wryly around the pipestem. That, he thought, was what the combined effects of insomnia, fatigue and damp, early morning air did to a man. It made him morbid—poetically morbid, which probably was even worse.

Things weren't so bad, were they? He had a sort of identity, one completely satisfying to those he knew. An identity which would have been more than satisfying to any other owner—anyone but himself. Edward Shannon....Not a bad name. People seemed to like it, seemed to like the man it belonged to. So that was all right. And he had a nice job, an important and well-paid job. Meyrick and Brandt was an engineering firm with money and prestige—and excellent political connections. You had to be good to work for Meyrick and Brandt. You had to have training and ability, personality and a certain kind of strength. He had all that, it seemed. And he had nice friends, a nice apartment. He had things to do and places to go, if that was what he needed.

What more could a man want?

Someone to come home to, maybe? Someone to set out his pipe and slippers and chatter to him about the small events of the day, about the price of meat and the cute hat in the window at Field's?

There was that, yes. But—

What in hell did he want?

The answer wasn't here. It wasn't to be found on this deserted street, not at two o'clock in the morning, if ever. It wasn't to be found at Meyrick and Brandt, and it wasn't to be found at his nice apartment. It wasn't to be found among his circle of nice friends. He was certain of that; he had carefully and subtly questioned them.

The answer wasn't to be found anywhere, it seemed. That was the hell of it. A living hell. *Or a living lie?*

Maybe he was nuts, just plain nuts. The thought chilled him, even though this was not the first time it had occurred.

Maybe he was yearning after voices to tell him things, the things he couldn't find any other way. If he yearned hard enough, maybe he'd begin hearing them.

His lips twitched with wan humor, the chill still gripping him. Voices, yet.... Down at Meyrick and Brandt they didn't like engineers who heard voices—not unless they came from a special pipeline to Washington.

Full-cycle, he thought. Back where we started from. Sadder, but no wiser. A little more tired, but not much more sleepy.

He sighed. Get along home, little dogey, and stop chasing your tail. Home, and a couple of straight slugs of Old Forester. That ought to work the trick. Alcohol on top of fatigue ought to stop all the wondering, all the questions, all the doubt. Alcohol was the key to oblivion; a key he'd been using a little too often of late. Down at Meyrick and Brandt they didn't mind alcohol, not much, not if a man carried it well. A little alcohol, in fact, was expected.

Meyrick and Brandt. He always got back to Meyrick and Brandt. One of the fleas on the tail he chased.

Somewhere not far away, he heard a car door slam. There were quick, light footsteps, the kind of footsteps a woman would make.

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Sounds from another world, heard by ears that didn't seem to be his own. Car doors had a habit of slamming. Women were often in a hurry. Maybe they were in the habit of being in a hurry. There were a lot of pipes and slippers to fetch, a lot of meat to buy, a lot of hats to look at in a lot of windows besides Field's.

He saw the corner materialize suddenly, as if it hadn't been there all along and his feet taking him toward it. Fast. Faster than he had known he was moving. Grab that Old Forester. Grab that tiger. No, that wasn't quite right, was it?

The corner, and his feet took him around it automatically. Why not? It was his corner. It was also a lot of other people's corner, but at two o'clock in the morning with the street deserted it was his corner. Why not? Wasn't possession nine points of the law?

No—it wasn't his corner after all. The girl wanted it, too, wanted it badly. She had been moving toward it even faster than he was moving.

He heard her startled gasp, and then he felt the softness of her against him and smelled her perfume. There wasn't too much perfume and what there was of it seemed expensive. A high-grade sort of perfume, noticeable but not glaringly conspicuous.

He staggered. She was a dead weight against him. He staggered a little more and turned and had the building against his side. That steadied him. A well-constructed building always did. Whoa! This was no time to go off half-cocked. You have a woman on your hands, Shannon. A woman on whom men—or a certain type of men—did not consider expensive, high-grade perfume a waste. Let's be gallant. Meyrick and Brandt not only expected that, too; they demanded it.

The girl was obviously well-constructed and certainly not as heavy as the building. He had the leverage and certainly the strength. The rest was easy. Meyrick and Brandt damned well should be proud of him.

He had his hands under her arms and he set her back on her feet. No—the expensive, high grade perfume wasn't a waste. It wasn't good enough. There would be few things good enough for this type of girl.

But what drained the breath out of him was her hair, that very special sort of blonde hair that goes with the best perfume. Her hair had slipped. It had slipped badly. It was halfway back on her head. He could see the rounded expanse of white, gleaming naked skin that curved up from her forehead.

She gasped again, more softly, and her slender hands sparkled briefly with rings and bracelets as they flashed up to her exposed skull. Exposed? Betrayed. That was the word. She evidently had seen his shock, the direction of his gaze. She didn't like being exposed, didn't like the discovery that she was. He didn't, either—oddly enough. She was too beautiful. In her black evening dress and ermine wrap she was too perfect. You wanted always to see her perfect. You always wanted to see her—period. To keep looking at her, never to let her go.

Shannon swallowed with effort. The best perfume, the very best. He'd gladly buy it by the gallon, gladly. Gallons of it, oceans of it.

Damned fool, you damned fool. What makes you think you'd ever get the chance? Your salary at Meyrick and Brandt was good, but not that good. This girl didn't know you, most likely wouldn't want to know you. She was just someone you ran into around a corner once in a lifetime. Once in a lifetime, and you'd never

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forget it, though you'd better start forgetting it fast. Fast. Look what she did to you, damned fool.

He was breathing hard and trembling. He licked at his lips and realized distantly that his pipe was gone. He was naked, too, betrayed. He looked away. You didn't watch a girl straightening her lovely blonde wig the way she'd straighten a showing slip or a crooked stocking seam. It just wasn't done. It especially wasn't done by anyone from Meyrick and Brandt.

Looking away wasn't enough. He wanted to move. He had to move. There was a straining and a pushing inside him, urgent, insistent.

"Zell! Zell!"

A man's voice, and a man's footsteps. Shannon became aware that he had been hearing footsteps for a second or two. There had been even the sound of a car door slamming. He was back down to earth, now. Heaven was far away—or only as far as it took to turn your head and look once more at the angel who was adjusting her blonde wig.

He didn't do that. He did what seemed the second best thing and peered around the corner.

The boyfriend was tall, husky, hatless and wore evening clothes. His face was momentarily shadowed, but it would be a face that went with a man of distinction. It would go with thick, softly waving gray hair.

"Zell! Wait—please! Let me apologize." A cultured voice, as cultured and hurried as the black patent evening shoes that gleamed in short, swift arcs along the sidewalk. But not too cultured, maybe. Not so cultured that a girl didn't have to run.

Shannon felt soft movement against him and smelled the perfume again. She was looking around the corner, too. She had adjusted her wig, and now she was ready for business.

She laughed, a brief, clear silvery chiming. "Never mind, Les. I've just met an old friend, and he'll see me home."

The boyfriend stopped short. He saw the girl, and now he saw Shannon. He stood looking, plainly startled and not willing to accept what he saw.

"Zell, I—" His hands lifted indecisively and fell back against his sides. "If you're sure you'll be all right..."

"I'm as safe as I would be with you, Les," the girl returned. She laughed again. "Maybe safer... 'Night, Les. Thanks for everything."

Shannon felt a tug on his arm and heard her voice close beside him, pitched more softly. "Do you mind?"

"No," he said. "No." He wanted to make it emphatic, but there were no other words he could find just then, and he repeated the only one he had in a frantic effort to make his willingness absolutely clear.

"We'll go this way," she said. "And thanks ever so much."

"It's all right. Glad to."

They started back in the direction from which Shannon had come.

THEY REACHED the middle of the block, walking hand in arm like old friends. She was silent. She would be occupied with the thought of escape. All he could think of was the light pressure of her fingers in the crook of his elbow and the smooth ease of her stride in the high-heeled evening slippers. Once in a lifetime, and all it cost was a pipe. No gallons of perfume, but if there was a chance...

He felt a change in her movements. She turned and was looking back over one shoulder. He looked, too, and saw the boyfriend standing on the corner, one hand lifted to scratch the back of his thick, gently waving gray hair. A puzzled man, an unhappy

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man, maybe a cheated man. What did it matter? He could always drown himself in his perfume.

Their heads swung back, then, and their glances met. She looked at him keenly, as though really seeing him for the first time. They were passing a lamp, and he saw the swift, impish curving of her red lips.

"I hope this isn't too much of an inconvenience."

"No," he said. "I wish it would happen to me more often."

"That's nice." Her smile seemed to soften as the impishness left it. "You're nice, too. Sometimes a girl . . . Well, it was one of those things. I needed badly to adopt a friend."

"Yes," Shannon said.

"You just happened to be on hand. You really don't mind, do you?"

"Gallons of perfume," Shannon began, and broke off, guilty and dismayed. He sensed her questioning look.

"A. . . a sort of pun," he explained lamely. "This wouldn't be the right time for it."

They reached the end of the block in silence and turned the corner. The lights were brighter here, there were moving cars and the show windows glowed.

"You wouldn't care to tell me your name? As an adopted friend?"

She was looking up at him. Her eyes were green, or maybe blue. He couldn't tell, but they were some vivid shade that was one or the other. Her features and her skin were as perfect as they had to be to go with the rest of her. They made him think of a pearl. They had the perfection of a pearl, and the whiteness and the soft, vital underlying color. Her face, he thought, was a jewel in a golden nest. He said, "I haven't been trying to keep my name secret. It's Shannon—Ed to friends and people who adopt me."

"Mine is Zelda Jardine." Her delicately arching brows lifted. "Does that explain the wig?"

"Why," he said, faltering, "I haven't—"

"Zelda Jardine," she said. "And *High in the Blue*. I make three changes of wigs for my different numbers—blonde, brunette, redhead." She grinned with an echo of her earlier impishness. "It's refreshing to meet someone who isn't connected with show business, who doesn't know show people—or who doesn't prey on show people."

"I've heard of *High in the Blue*, and I should have connected you with it. Guess I haven't been keeping up with things lately."

"Somebody's been missing something, and I don't mean the show I'm in. Though it's drawing the cash customers very nicely, thank you."

They talked more easily now. He could have kept talking and walking until dawn, but their steps ate up the distance around the block and back toward the approximate point from which she had fled the gray-haired man's car.

She stopped before the entrance to a tall elegantly modernistic apartment hotel. "Home," she said. "Safe and sound. Thanks ever so much." Her voice was soft, her vivid eyes suddenly grave.

"I enjoyed being adopted," Shannon said. He hesitated. "Well. . . good-night."

What else could he say? That he wanted to see her again, that he wanted to talk to her—that there were questions she might be able to answer?

He could so easily be wrong. She might so easily not know the answers. And if he were wrong, it would be another case of East being East and West being West and the twain never meeting. It would be a case of moving

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in different worlds. No, not different. The same world. But—

He needed time. The piece of a puzzle had been dropped in his lap, and he had to see where it fitted—if if wasn't just an illusion, something he thought was there, but which would be gone when he looked again. He needed time. He needed those slugs of Old Forester. He needed to sit down and get hold of his thoughts and keep them from going round and round.

He had, after all, been adopted just for a walk around the block. Better let it go at that. For a while, anyway. Later, maybe—

Whoa, Shannon! Easy, boy!

She seemed to be hesitating, too. Her lovely eyes were watching him. They seemed to sense his decision, his withdrawal from her. They dropped.

"Good-night."

He watched as she entered the building and moved out of sight. The lamp-lit darkness seemed suddenly cold and empty.

SHANNON took off his hat and trenchcoat and put them away in the hall closet. Still frowning in puzzled thought, he started for the kitchenette. The apartment had two and a half rooms, large, attractive rooms in a large, attractive building. A building on the same street as the one where the girl in the blonde wig lived, each separated from the other by little more than a block of total distance and an intersecting boulevard.

Convenient, Shannon thought. Provided, of course...

From a built-in cabinet he took the bottle of Old Forester and a jigger glass. He took the first drink straight, gulping a little at the burn of it down his throat. The second drink he followed with half a tumbler of water.

Well, Shannon? Feel better? That give you a hold on solid earth?

A little. Not much.

He went into the bedroom. He stripped off his tweed jacket, his tie and his shirt. He stood in front of the full-length mirror in the closet door and looked at himself, self-conscious with having known all along that he was going to do this. Then he reached up and pried carefully with his fingernails, carefully along his forehead and temples and the back of his neck.

He removed his crisp-curling brown wig.

The skin of his head was pale and utterly smooth, of course. It had been smooth and barren of hair for as long as he could remember. And how long was that? About two years. Yes, just about two years. Before that there was only—blankness, emptiness, a void. That was the thing that kept throwing him. As far as he knew, he had been alive only for about two years.

Hairlessness was not unusual. Many people were hairless. Any number of things could cause it—a hormone lack, glandular unbalance, illness, disease, shock. But in his case...

He was different. He didn't know exactly how, but he was certain he was different. Deep, deep down, he was certain.

He didn't belong. He had an identity of a sort. He had a name—Edward Shannon. But what's in a name? A name is a label, a tag. It doesn't explain what it is applied to. The word "book" doesn't explain any particular book. Even "fiction book" is vague and uninformative.

In short, he didn't know *who* he actually was—or *what*. There seemed no physically satisfying niche or pigeonhole in which he could place himself. He existed in the world but wasn't part of it. How did that poem

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go? That poem. . .

". . . *a stranger . . . in a world I never made.*"

Yes, that was it. *A stranger. A world I never made.*

But perhaps that wasn't quite right. Down at Meyrick and Brandt he was helping to remake the world. And how long—exactly how long—had he been at Meyrick and Brandt?

The skin on her head had been completely smooth, too, gleamingly, femininely smooth. No fuzz, no suggestion of stubble, no hint of five o'clock shadow. Nothing. That didn't have to be unusual. Her role in *High in the Blue* required three changes of wigs. She could have her head shaved daily, which would be rather drastic. She could even take depilatory treatments, which would be even more drastic. A woman values her hair, even if only in a boyish bob. A woman's hair is her crowning glory.

Zelda Jardine could be different, too. Zelda Jardine.

How did you find out whether a girl actually was different? You started in by colliding with her at a street corner. Early in the morning, if possible, and with a boyfriend in full chase. But after that?

Did you visit her and doff your wig and say, "Beg your pardon, Miss Jardine, but I've got a hunch I'm different. Sub or supernormal, I don't know which. Because of this wig, here, see? And I think you're different, too: Because you wear a wig, too, see? Three of them. So maybe if we put our bare or bewigged heads together, maybe we can figure what this is all about. If anything."

No, you didn't do that, did you? What did you do? Did you go quietly back to your job at Meyrick and Brandt? Did you keep wondering and doubting and walking the streets when you should be sleeping? Did you keep grasping at the shadows in your mind, the shadows that seemed to have so much to tell, that were so tantalizing, so elusive? Or did you have another couple of slugs of Old Forester and go to bed and try to dream of the angel from *High in the Blue* who made three changes of wigs?

Yes, I suppose you did nothing more than that.

SHANNON was in his office at Meyrick and Brandt at the usual time. He filled and lighted his pipe and read his mail. Then he unlocked one of a row of filing cabinets and took out a sheaf of papers. He went to the drafting department and spoke to several men in succession. He returned to his office with a thick roll of blue prints, which he spread out and tacked down on a large tilted table opposite his desk. Filling and lighting his pipe again, he lost himself in a maze of details.

The door opened, and Lester J. Brandt III put his head in the room. His title of vice president was engraved in bronze behind his words. "I want to see you in my office, Shannon. Right away."

"Sure," Shannon said, and started to weight down his papers before leaving his office.

Lester J. Brandt III had put away his hat and his topcoat and was waiting behind his king-sized mahogany desk. His thick, gently waving gray hair was brushed carefully. He held a silver letter opener, and with this daintily pushed back and forth the pipe that lay on the tooled leather desktop.

"Morning," Shannon said.

Brandt nodded. Behind his desk, now, his title was engraved in steel—cold steel.

"This is your pipe, I believe, Shannon?"

"Yes," Shannon said. "Thanks."

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Brandt leaned back in his luxurious chair, watching as Shannon picked up the pipe. His light blue eyes were as icy and hard as his voice. "I didn't know you were acquainted with Zell Jardine, Shannon."

"I never saw her before last night —at least, not in person."

"But she said something about your being an old friend."

Shannon lifted one shoulder. "That was just something she said. I happened to be handy. She adopted me."

Brandt's full lips overlapped in thought, and his thoughts left him dissatisfied. "Frankly, Shannon, it seems...well, it seems quite a coincidence, your being at that particular place, at that particular time."

"I happen to live in the neighborhood. I take a walk almost every night, often quite late at night, and often along the street where Miss Jardine lives. I live on the same street." Shannon had to speak slowly. Other thoughts kept crowding up in his mind, and he had to detour around them.

"Didn't you recognize me?" Brandt demanded, as if the mere fact of his identity should have been of crucial importance. "I thought I knew who you were. I was positive, when I saw your pipe lying on the sidewalk."

Easy, Shannon. Easy. Just keep detouring.

He said, "I thought you looked familiar, but many men look alike at night and from a distance. Many men call out in much the same tone of voice. I wasn't certain, and I didn't have time to find out."

Hell with detouring, he thought suddenly. A man had his pride.

He leaned forward a little under the pressure of a violent inner wind. "I don't get this. I don't see any reason for a third degree. I don't see any reason for getting called out on the carpet. Miss Jardine got home safely. What happened had no connection with business? It didn't cost the company any money. It doesn't put me under any particular professional obligation to explain what I do outside office hours."

Brandt's eyes had fallen and his face was slightly flushed. He shifted in his chair, his expression mirroring a conflict between outrage and conciliation. He muttered finally: "I suppose I should apologize, Shannon. I have a deep...well, a deep emotional interest in Miss Jardine. I guess I let it get the better of me. I hope you'll overlook the matter."

Shannon nodded. There had been no definite apology, but he wanted none. He was satisfied with a temporary truce.

In a more smoothly affable tone, Brandt went on, "We'll forget the whole affair then. Thanks, Shannon. And by the way, this is entirely between you and me, of course."

"Of course," Shannon said. His eyes rested on Brandt's carefully brushed gray hair for a moment before he turned away. The thought had struck him suddenly. That carefully brushed gray hair... Real—or a wig?

If Zelda Jardine actually were like himself, then there would be others. How many others? Were they people he knew?

Back in his office, Shannon sat down and unclenched his fingers from their aching grip on the pipe. He saw that the bowl had been split in the fall. In a sudden upsurge of the anger he had been fighting down, he hurled the pipe into his wastebasket. It had no value to him anymore. It had been contaminated.

His whole conception of Meyrick and Brandt had been contaminated, too. A short time previously he would have considered it sheer heresy—but

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now he felt that something smelled bad about Meyrick and Brandt.

HE COULD see the apartment hotel's brightly illuminated entrance from where he stood between two buildings on the opposite side of the street. Like a candleflame, he thought. And he was a moth, beating his wings around it.

Why risk it, Shannon? Why not leave well enough alone?

Well enough . . .

What was that? Was it the hell he had been living? Was it being unable to sleep at night and walking the streets, driven, always driven, by the questions he needed so badly to have answered? Was it skulking around like this, like a bashful kid with a crush, hoping for a glimpse of her?

He had seen her twice in the past several days—always at a distance. Once he had seen her in *High in the Blue*. The ticket, purchased from a scalper, had cost plenty. But it had been worth it. The show had been good and had left him with no doubt that she was the reason.

The other time he had seen her being escorted into an expensive car by a man in impeccable evening clothes. A stranger. She would know a lot of men. They would hover about her like moths, too.

But tonight she was alone—alone and at home. Temporarily, of course. Yet, there would be enough time for him to see her while she was still alone, still at home. He had only to cross the street and walk into the building. She would see him. He was certain she would see him.

But once they stood face to face, what would he say? How would he begin? If he were wrong, she would think him crazy. She would refuse to ever see him again. And his private, individual hell would be all the worse.

He didn't know. He was just guessing. That was the trouble. He could be wrong about her, wrong about himself, wrong about everything.

On the other hand—he might be right after all. She might actually be different—just like he was. And she might be just as puzzled and lost as he was.

Babes in the woods. And as hairless as babes.

But he wouldn't be alone any more. It would be wonderful not to be alone any more.

What to do, Shannon? Make up your mind—if you have one. You can't stay here all night. Someone's going to spot you and call the cops. Cops can ask a lot of embarrassing questions.

He was on a giant clock pendulum, swinging back and forth in great, dizzy arcs. *Tick, tock.* The seconds were years. Centuries were passing.

Make up your mind, Shannon.

Tick, Tock. Back, forth. Yes, no. Go in, stay out.

Make up your mind, Shannon.

He was sweating. He could feel the moisture on his face, under his arms. He could feel the bite of his fingernails in the palms of his hands.

It meant so much, so damned much. Could she possibly understand?

There was such a terrible risk that she wouldn't. Too much of a risk.

Go home, Shannon. Wait a little longer. You've waited this long. What's a few more million years?

He was on the sidewalk, moving blindly, drunkenly. People passed him in a fog, wraiths from another world. He heard laughter, receding and dying away, like a train whistle in the night.

That's it, Shannon. Go home.

Only he wasn't going home. He was crossing the street, walking toward the candle flame.

There was a glass door and then

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a stretch of tastefully modernistic lobby. There was a curved counter of bleached wood with letter racks in the wall behind it. Then there was a small, prim man across the counter, popping up from nowhere with the suddenness of a child's jack-in-the-box.

"Yes, sir?"

"Zelda Jardine. I...I'd like to see her."

"Who shall I say is calling?" The desk clerk's expression became a little more prim, as if he reserved the right to disapprove of Zelda Jardine's visitors.

"Shannon. She'll remember me."

SHE WOULD see him. Apt. 609.

An elevator took Shannon up. He pressed the button beside the door and took a deep breath and wiped his damp palm against the side of his trenchcoat. He heard light footsteps. The door opened as dramatically as a stage curtain swinging aside. Only he was the one on the stage, with the spotlight glaring down on him and his lines forgotten.

She wore a red hostess gown—and her blonde wig. She looked more than ever like an angel, and her smile was as good as a halo.

"This is quite a surprise."

Incredibly, she seemed glad to see him. Genuinely glad. She looked as if she had been waiting a long time for him and had finally given up hope and then he had appeared. Her voice lilted. Her vivid eyes shone.

It would be tough to disappoint her. He said, "I thought I'd drop in for a minute or so. If you're too busy..."

That was it. That would give him an out, keep him from getting burned.

This was all a mistake. He shouldn't be here. He should be home, with his shoes off and his pipe going and the bottle of Old Forester within reach. He should be where he could just think of the questions in his mind, not where the temptation to ask them would be too strong to resist.

Those wild, frightening, dangerous questions.

Beat it, Shannon. Scram while you have a chance. Tell her you suddenly remembered your wife and six kids. Tell her—

She had his hat and coat. She was saying something about not having expected to see him again. Then he was following her down a short hall and into a bright expanse of living room. She said something about drinks, and he heard a voice answer. It was hauntingly familiar, like the voices heard on warm summer nights.

He saw draw draperies in front of him and an oversize sofa flanked by tall table lamps. He sat down. He stood up again. He felt for his pipe, found it, then saw the cigarettes on the cocktail table at his feet. He lit a cigarette and stared for a moment at the lighter flame.

Burn, moth! Burn, foolish, blundering moth!

She was back. He took the cold glass she handed him and watched as she sat down on the sofa. Her eyes were grave, as if she had sensed his tension.

She said slowly, in the silence, "I hope that what happened hasn't been troubling you."

"I'm afraid it has," he said.

Her eyes widened a little. "Why ...I'm sorry. If I had known—"

"Look." He put his glass on the cocktail table and dropped down beside her. He kneaded his hands together and watched them, as if their motions expressed what he wanted to say. "Look. It wasn't exactly what happened—I mean, not in general. It was one particular thing, a thing I

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haven't been able to get out of my mind.

"I'm probably wrong—completely wrong. Maybe I'm crazy. I don't know. But I've got to find out. It means a lot to me. If I'm crazy—if I'm wrong—just tell me and I'll go. I won't bother you again."

She moved her golden head the faintest bit, her lower lip held between her teeth.

"It was your wig," he went on desperately. "I had to know why you wear a wig. I know about the show you're in. I saw it a few days ago. It's a swell show. But your wearing a wig — Look. Do you have to wear one all the time? I mean, maybe there's something wrong...."

"That's rather a delicate question, Mr. Shannon." She was looking down into her glass, avoiding him.

"I know," he muttered. "I know. It took me this long to get around to asking it. But it's important to me. Terribly important. Look, Miss Jardine. Let's try this another way. Do you ever have the feeling that you're ...different? That you're lost, and there are things you want to know? That your whole life—"

She stood up. She half turned from him, silent and cold.

"All right," he said. "I'll go. I... I'm sorry."

He was starting past her when he felt her fingers on his arm. He stopped and stared at her for a strange, numb instant. Her eyes were swimming in wetness. Then she moved. Or it was he that moved. It was somehow inexplicable, somehow inevitable. There was motion and she was in his arms and time hung suspended in the chasm of eternity.

They were still standing, close together, when the telephone rang.

She whispered, "Wait. Whoever it is, I'll just say—" She hurried to a desk across the room, lifted the receiver of the telephone that stood on it. "Yes?... No, I can't see him now. Tell him...tell him I'm not well."

A pause. Shannon could see her frowning. The man downstairs evidently was determined not to be put off.

"I just can't see him now!" she went on. "Some other time, please... Then tell him I don't want to see him. Not now—not even next year."

It didn't work. He could see that as she replaced the receiver and turned back to him.

"It was Les—Lester Brandt. He's coming up here." She darted forward. "He...he called me up that night. He seemed to know you."

"We work for the same engineering outfit," Shannon said. "Only he's the vicepresident."

She caught at his arms. "The bedroom. You can wait in the bedroom."

His face tightened. "Brandt hasn't got anything that makes me want to hide."

"I want it that way. I want you to wait."

"All right."

She swooped and was holding out his glass. "Take this with you."

Shannon was closing the bedroom door behind him when he heard the bell ring. The glass burned his hand. He wanted to throw it. He wanted to throw it fast and hard.

He stood beside the door and felt the slow, sullen heat of his face. Brandt again. Vice president. You couldn't miss it. Lester J. Brandt III took pains to see that you didn't miss it. Even after business hours.

Nobody missed it. Not even Zelda Jardine was immune.

He stood there and tried not to listen. He could hear them talking blurrily beyond the door.

Keep out of it, Shannon. That part

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of it doesn't interest you. All you want is information.

No—that wasn't all you wanted. You wanted Zelda Jardine, too. You wanted to eat your cake and have it. You had held her in your arms and it was something you would never forget. It was something you wanted never to be without.

But she didn't know anything. Or wouldn't tell. She hadn't committed herself. She might be different. And might not. But if she weren't, why had she stopped him? Why had she told him to wait?

It didn't make sense. Nothing made sense. But the tight, writhing, white-hot ball of anger inside him—he understood that.

Keep out of it, Shannon. Hold onto yourself, boy.

He looked at the glass in his hand. He lifted it abruptly and drained it. A drop of water on a forest fire.

There was a chest nearby. He placed the glass on it, walking softly. He wanted to keep walking. He wanted to do something—something violent. He had the sensation of being caged, held impotent.

The voices beyond the door. Don't listen.

But he was listening. The voices were suddenly louder. Then Zelda's rose sharply on a note of protest and pain.

That's for you, Shannon.

He had the bedroom door open in a flash and crossed the living room with long, hungry strides.

Brandt and Zelda stood near one end of the sofa. He was gripping her shoulders and had her bent partly back, shaking her a little, speaking swiftly and harshly. She was struggling to break free. Her gown had opened to her waist, and her hair shimmered like a golden stream with her writhing movements.

Brandt remained unaware of Shannon's presence until Shannon reached him and whirled him around. For an instant of stunned recognition, Brandt stared. Then Shannon's fist made a meaty sound against his face, and he staggered back against the sofa, fell sprawling to the cushions.

Go to it, Shannon. You've been wanting to do this for a long time. You have nothing to lose now. Your job is gone, finished, done with. You might as well forget you ever worked for Meyrick and Brandt.

The Brandt part was dazed, but not out. Shannon caught him by the coat front, pulled him forward, knocked him back again. He was reaching for the coat front once more when he felt Zelda's fingers on his arm.

"No!" she said. "Please. That's enough."

He looked at her through a clearing reddish haze. "The rat! Did he hurt you?"

"It's all right now. Let him be."

His eyes sharpened on Brandt. A thought that had been nagging at the back of his mind now shouldered its way forward into immediate consciousness.

Go ahead, Shannon. You'll never get another chance like this.

He bent over Brandt. The man was limp, unresisting, his eyes closed. He felt carefully along the hairline with his fingertips, then in sudden excitement was using his thumbnails to pry.

The thick, gently waving gray wig was held on by an adhesive undercoating. Shannon peeled it entirely away, stood looking at it with a numb, incredulous feeling of triumph.

Brandt too? How many more were there?

And just what did this mean? There had to be a meaning, something tremendous, something awesome and important.

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Zelda was watching him, silent and motionless, frozen, one hand at her throat.

What did she know? How did she fit in?

How do you fit in, Shannon?

Silence. A curious timelessness. The atmosphere of the room was unreal, nightmarishly crystalline. He and Zelda and Brandt were bugs embedded in transparent plastic, immobile, voiceless. They were motes held by a charged, straining tension.

His fingers moved over the wig. It felt odd somehow, different from his own. He realized then that the scalp had an extremely fine metal mesh worked into it. Fine wires ran from this, losing themselves indistinguishably amid the strands of gray hair.

The next step should be obvious, Shannon. Don't be modest. This is no time to be modest.

He reached up. He removed his wig. In its place he fitted the one he had taken from Brandt.

He stiffened. For as the wig molded to his skull, he heard—voices. Soundless voices. In his mind. They were almost like thoughts of his own, but thoughts he couldn't bring to focus, vague and fleeting.

"...to Washington yesterday...international situation...general rise in stocks..."

Then, very clearly: *"...are you in contact? I'm coming in..."*

That faded. The voices were vague and fleeting again.

"...more atomic laboratories...government control...in the hands of our group...have to end this interference..."

And then, suddenly sharp and strong: *"What's this? There's an outsider in the circuit somewhere!"*

He had a vivid impression of identity, one unfamiliar to him. He realized his own identity had been sensed in a similar fashion and recognized as strange.

Outsider. That was himself. Shannon—outsider.

He hesitated, aware of danger, yet gripped by the fascination of what he was experiencing.

That other identity in the mental void was sending out an alarm, an almost purely emotional current that spread like ripples over a pool.

"Watch out, everyone! There's an outsider in the circuit! Be on guard!"

Other, muted voices rose in echo.

"...someone listening in...not of our group...must have gotten hold of a receiver..."

Suddenly, thunderously: *"Blank him out! Quick!"*

The threat was somehow unmistakable. It spoke of action, immediate and violent.

End of the line, Shannon. The party's over. And you'd better be damned fast.

He tore the wig off and threw it away from him. He watched it and felt the heavy, bellows-like rhythm of his heart.

Blank him out. In some way it had an overpowering significance. In some way it had a vital meaning for him.

In what way, Shannon? Do you really know? Or is your imagination just working overtime because of what happened?

No, there were memories. Deep down and far away, there were memories, meshing slowly and clumsily, like gears rusty from long disuse.

Blank him out. That was what had happened to him, of course. He knew that now. He had been blanked out. Something had been done to him—a sort of mental short-circuiting—and the knowledge of his existence up to a point two years ago had been almost completely erased.

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He had been made to forget. He had forgotten why he was different, why he wore a wig. He had forgotten there were others like himself, had forgotten his relationships with them. There was a thoroughness about it, a magnitude, that chilled him to the last warm fibre of being.

So that's it, Shannon. You were blanked out. You know that much more. And now—

Now there was Zelda watching him, still motionless and frozen, her hand still at her throat. There was Brandt on the sofa, still limp and sprawled. And there was the gray wig on the floor—*burning*.

It had happened very suddenly. The flames had appeared like light at the pressing of a switch. And as he moved in almost instinctive response, he thought of the metal mesh worked into the wig, of the fine metal wires threading through the hair. Metal—and metal can be made very hot.

He kicked the wig over the rug. He kept kicking it until he found the bathroom, and there he watched the blaze burn itself out on the tiles. He felt a little sick. This blanking out process was a drastic thing, a frightening thing.

The gears meshed again. There was a kind of blast—a queer, *inward* blast—and then you felt the heat. You tore your wig away, and you watched it burn. And you wondered as you watched. You wondered a little as a child would wonder. Because you no longer remembered how or why or who. There were so many things you no longer remembered.

You were blanked out. You were excluded—marooned. But you still remembered certain fundamental things. You still went about the business of living and making a living. You still knew the motions. The only real difference was that certain doors had been closed on you. You were locked out, left in the cold.

He found Zelda before him and felt her urgency in the grip of her hands. Her face was drawn and pale.

"We have to leave," she said. "We can't stay here now."

"But why?" he asked. "What is this all about?"

"Brandt's group will check their circuit. They'll find him missing, and they'll trace him here. They have ways of doing that." She shook him. "Quick! We have so little time."

He nodded and followed her as she hurried back into the living room. His understanding of the situation wasn't much clearer, but her very anxiety told him all he needed to know just then.

She gestured at Brandt, still limp and sprawled. "We'll take him with us. There's a fire escape at the end of the hall, and you can get him out of the building that way without being seen. I'll take his car keys, then get the car and pick you up."

"All right," he said. He felt an eagerness, a kind of vibrant rekindling, as if he had just started living again after a long interruption.

CARRYING Brandt's inert weight down the fire escape proved difficult, but he managed it without discovery. He lowered his burden to the ground with a sense of relief, and in the darkness of the alley settled down to wait. He wore his hat and trenchcoat. Brandt's own hat had been jammed tightly on the man's head and the charred remains of the gray wig stuffed into one of his pockets as an afterthought by Zelda.

So far so good, Shannon. Or was it good? Was he doing what was right? He knew nothing of Zelda yet. He didn't know how she fitted in. He couldn't be certain that her interests

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might not, in the long run, be opposed to his.

In spite of certain things that had happened, she could easily be—an enemy.

And Brandt? He didn't know how Brandt fitted in, either. Brandt belonged to a group of some sort, a group composed of persons who were different just as he and Zelda were different. A group possessing wigs—receivers—which made possible telepathic communication, and evidently even a kind of telepathic punishment. A group with what seemed awesome ramifications in every field of human affairs—in government, in the stock market, in atomic research.

Brandt could be a friend. He had, after all, been working for Brandt.

What was right and what was wrong? What could he believe?

Cut it out, Shannon. This is no time to come apart at the seams. You've got to see this business through. But be careful. Watch your step from here on in. Don't let red lips and soft arms fool you. Especially not a lovely hairless head.

Car lights swung into the mouth of the alley and swelled blindingly as they approached. His awareness of being hunted and fugitive made him press tensely against the building at his back until he was certain that Zelda was the driver of the car.

"Put him in back," she said. "Hurry!"

The car was large and sleekly luxurious. Thrusting Brandt onto the rear seat, Shannon climbed in beside the girl. She sent the car rolling smoothly toward the alley's opposite end.

She had dressed hastily, yet becomingly. She had changed her wig for one of a less conspicuous blonde shade and a shorter length. She looked still beautiful, still angelic.

He smelled the fragrance that breathed from her and remembered having held her in his arms. And his doubt of her made him ache.

Careful, Shannon. You might get burned yet—more quickly and completely than you ever thought.

After a while she caught his glance and moved her head toward the back of the car. "How is he?" she asked.

"Still out," Shannon said. "I gave him another sock for good luck before I took him down the fire escape."

She shook her head a little. "We try not to hurt each other. Not too badly. Even when we have to. There are so few of us, you see."

"How many?" He held his breath, watching her. If she hesitated the slightest bit...

She didn't. At least, it wasn't discernible in the rapidly shifting light along the wide thoroughfare down which the car was moving.

"A little over four thousand, I believe. Originally, there were about two hundred of us. We stayed pretty close together at first. But in our different ways we had to make a living. Even here. We were superior in some respects, but not too superior. We had to avoid discovery, had to fit ourselves quietly into the scheme of things. We each had different talents, different training. And so we were forced to spread out. In time we spread... well, just about everywhere."

Her voice went on more softly, yet remained distinct over the throb of the car motor. "In the beginning, we were afraid of losing contact with ourselves, afraid of becoming lost. There were so many of the others, you see. We were drops of water in an ocean. But the receivers solved that problem—for a while, anyway. They could be disguised as wigs, and we had to wear wigs here, to start with.

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"From the very first there were those among us who wanted to take over control of things here. Maybe they could have done it. We weren't exactly superior, of course, but we knew more in a lot of ways. The majority, though, was against taking over control. They argued that it wasn't ethical, that it just wasn't decent. We were guests here—uninvited guests, at that. But the point that won out was that we couldn't keep control in the long run. Once the others learned our tricks and organized against us, that would be the end of everything. We were different. That fact alone made us enemies.

"We—the majority of us, at least—wanted to be friends. And for the most part, we have been. We've done a lot of good. We've helped to make a lot of improvements, socially and scientifically. There are still wars, but war brings the greatest changes and advances, and brings them most swiftly. Not that we wanted it that way. There are too few of us to prevent it, and we don't have control. It's true that we've gradually arrived at a sort of indirect control. We simply knew more and couldn't have avoided it. But there are still too many factors beyond our ability to influence. We aren't gods. We've been reminded too often of that."

She spoke almost dreamily, her eyes fixed on the road ahead. He sat very still, afraid to move, afraid to break the spell. The interior of the car was filled with a soft dimness and a remote throbbing. They were on the outskirts of the city now, and the buildings were rapidly thinning out.

"We don't have full control," she went on, "but there are still those of us who want it. Like Les Brandt and his group. He already had control of his own particular field, just as the members of his group had control over theirs. The rest might have been merely a matter of time, patience and careful planning. But there are still those of us who saw the dangers of control, and these formed a group opposed to Brandt's. There was even war of a sort between them. There was attack and counter-attack. But it was a strange war. The participants didn't want to hurt each other too much. Up to now, that is. Now there has been a change. Desperation did that, I think, awakening a kind of atavistic ruthlessness in a certain few. Brandt is one. A number of things have proved that to me.

"The first step in the change came when Brandt's group altered their receivers to operate on a different wavelength. That gave them secrecy. And they kept a constant guard, so that anyone else who entered their circuit would be instantly detected. They even developed a sort of mental static powerful enough to cause a curious amnesia in those they caught."

She glanced at Shannon. There was a sudden gentleness in her face, a sympathy. "Evidently you're one who was caught. I think you were working against Brandt and the others. It would have to be that way. And afterward they kept you to work for them. Our kind are always useful to each other. Or maybe Brandt didn't know about it, even after it happened. The techniques known now weren't developed all at once. And in wigs we look just like ordinary people. The amnesia—to call it that—wasn't actually incapacitating. You could go on quite as usual, without those around you being aware that anything had happened to you."

"I see..." Shannon said slowly. "But what about you? What is your place in all this?"

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"I am—or was—a neutral, a member of a sort of third group, caught between the other two. We happen to be in positions where we couldn't do much either way. Some of us have lost contact completely and don't know what is going on. I met Brandt as a result of the show I'm in. The changes of wigs involved seems to have led him to me. He wanted me to come over on his side—in more ways than one. But I preferred to remain neutral, and he became very insistent, especially after he learned that you and I were acquainted."

Shannon recalled the interview in Brandt's office. He thought he understood now the motive for the other's sharp cross-examination.

Brandt knew you were different, Shannon. Brandt knew all along. If he had considered you an ordinary man, he wouldn't have been worried about your relationship to Zelda. And he wouldn't have been conciliatory.

He said to the girl, "There's one important thing you haven't explained yet. Who are we? What are we?"

She gave him an odd glance. She seemed abruptly sad, a little bitter, and yet quietly proud. "We are nothing more than we could possibly be—another race. Our forebears came from the stars. Originally, it seems, they were part of an expedition fleet. But something happened, and their ship became lost. They finally stumbled across this world. A well-advanced civilization already existed here, but fortunately the native race was physically very little different from our own. Any race developing under similar conditions was likely to resemble ours, you know, and those conditions have been repeated more than once in the vastness of the universe. Many of our people died during the landing, in a crash that destroyed the ship. Only about two hundred were left. We—"

Her voice ended in a sharp intake of breath.

Shannon saw something move deliberately and swiftly behind the girl. An arm. Brandt's arm. The fingers were closed around a small, flat automatic pistol, and the muzzle was pressed to the back of Zelda's head.

The car swerved, straightened, slowed.

"Careful, Zell!" Brandt said in a thick, breathless voice. "You too, Shannon!"

A voice in a waking nightmare. Shannon listened to it with a numb, incredulous dismay. The thing couldn't be real. Brandt was unconscious, helpless. He couldn't be holding a gun. He couldn't—

Face it, Shannon: He's holding a gun, all right. And he's holding a gun because you didn't sock him hard enough, because you didn't search him carefully enough. You slipped up. Maybe it was just that you didn't do things like this every day. Maybe you didn't fully get the idea this was a game being played for keeps. But you slipped up. And now—

Face it, Shannon. You and Zelda are in trouble. Bad trouble.

"Turn off the road and stop," Brandt told Zelda. "Do just as I say. I'll shoot if I have to."

She swung the car into the soft earth at one side and braked it. All around them empty fields stretched away into the darkness. The nearest buildings were visible only as a cluster of distant lights, and other cars flashed by only at long intervals.

They were alone, Shannon knew. Alone and not likely to be disturbed.

That didn't improve the situation.

Brandt's gun. He looked at it with a bleak yearning. If he could manage

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to grab the gun... But no, he couldn't do that. Not while it was pressed to Zelda's head. Not while Brandt showed no reluctance about shooting.

"Now we can talk," Brandt said. He carefully sat back, his eyes quick and alert as they touched Shannon. "I made a mistake about you. The blank-out treatment is quite thorough as a rule, and I was certain you were harmless. But it seems you knew a lot more than you let on. And it seems you knew Zell a lot better than you told me you did. It also seems that you two were working against me."

The girl shook her head. "He learned I was wearing a wig the night I ran into him. This evening he came to see me about it. He thought I could explain certain things that had been bothering him. When you showed up I had him wait in the bedroom. I knew what your reaction to seeing him would be, and I wanted to avoid unpleasantness. Then you got rough, and he didn't know any better than to come to my help."

"But now he knows a lot better, eh?" Brandt asked ironically. "Especially after he investigated my receiver."

She shrugged. "He had figured out that much—or remembered that much. It couldn't have been helped."

"I have other ideas about that, Zell." Brandt was grimly emphatic. "As for you, it seems you aren't quite as neutral as you have insisted you were. There's something highly suspicious about you and Shannon spiriting me away like this. Just what did you intend doing with me?"

"Shannon was discovered using your receiver," she said wearily. "I knew you'd be traced to my apartment. I didn't want to get any more involved than I was already, so we left. I guess I had the idea that we could drive to some quiet place and talk this over."

Brandt smiled thinly. "Smooth, Zell. Smooth and quick. But I'm very much afraid I can't take any chances with you. You've gone against me once too often. I and the others of my group are too close to success to risk any possibility of defeat at this stage. Before much longer we'll have the whole world in our pockets.

"So we can't gamble with unpredictable factors like you and Shannon, Zell. And we can't let our peculiar racial sentimentality stand in our way. There was a time when we avoided hurting each other beyond little things like the blank-out treatment. But that time has come to an end. Now we're fully prepared to take sterner measures."

Shannon said, "If you're talking about murder, Brandt, then don't forget you're still subject to the laws of this world, even if you are of another race. You can't hope to get away with murder."

"I'm relying on more than hope," Brandt returned calmly. "We have certain tricks that the people here know nothing about. Don't overlook that."

It could be gotten away with, Shannon admitted in despair. In one way or another. People who might be able to furnish evidence, for example, could be made to forget.

The end of living is this close, Shannon. The end of living when living had finally come to mean so much. Do something. Don't sit like a bump on a log. Do something heroic. It's expected in situations like this.

But he didn't feel heroic. He couldn't think of anything to do, short of jumping at Brandt's gun, and that was too far away and could go off much faster than he could hope to

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move.

He could die a hero, anyway. He could do that much for Zelda.

Zelda . . . Zelda was touching her hair. It was as though her appearance were more important at the moment than the mere fact of dying. The fine-drawn stillness took on a sudden grotesque quality.

Brandt said in surprise, "That wig of yours, Zell. I've never seen it before." Then his voice slashed. "Take it off, Zell! Give it to me!"

"No. I—" She leaned away from him, her features mirroring swift alarm.

"Damn it, girl, if you've somehow—" Brandt lunged forward. His hand shot out, and then he had the wig.

"Careful!" he snapped at Shannon. "Don't make me kill you any sooner than I have to."

Shannon sighed and relaxed. Being a hero wasn't as easy as it was cracked up to be.

With the back of his hand, Brandt pushed his hat off. His other hand held the automatic with watchful steadiness.

He placed the underside of Zelda's wig against his naked head. His movements were cautious, alert.

In the very next instant he stiffened. He started to jerk the wig from his head. He froze. He was a statue, rigid and immobile. A statue with panic and horror finely chiseled into its face.

He didn't move when Shannon roughly swept the automatic out of his hand.

That bizarre interval finally ended. Brandt sagged backward. He gazed about him with a dawning wonder. He had forgotten his gun. His eyes touched Shannon and the girl with no perceptible recognition.

Zelda sighed, a slow, deep sigh. "They were waiting for him," she said softly. "Everything was ready. All I had to do was draw his attention to the wig. Once he touched it, no matter how careful he tried to be, he was caught. They have tricks of their own, too—tricks that not even Brandt could have known anything about."

"They?" Shannon said. "Who do you mean, Zelda?"

"The other group. The group working against Brandt's group. They learned that I was acquainted with Brandt, you see, and they wanted me over on their side, too. They gave me the wig. But I wanted to remain neutral, in spite of everything." She shook her head and smiled slightly, a little sadly. "I found it couldn't be done. I had run into someone around a corner, and I couldn't be neutral any more."

He felt her hand touch his, and he tenderly closed his fingers over it. "Then what happened to Brandt. He's forgotten?"

"More than that. They got into his mind. They know the names of everyone in his group. So they'll forget, too. There won't be any control of the world. We can all be neutral now. We can all just think about being happy—and I think I'm going to be very happy."

"I think the same about myself," he said.

He drew her against him and knew he held the answer to every last question. He had reached the end of all his doubts and all his wondering. He was no longer lost, and no longer alone.

THE END

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Once Jeremiah saw things as they really were, there was no point bothering over them

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HE KNEW ALL THE ANSWERS

By Dallas Ross

What really happens when the lights go out? Does the sun remain when you close your eyes? In case of doubt, ask Jeremiah. He knows . . .

SUCH WAS Jeremiah Perkins' appearance and manner that nobody ever called him Jerry; not even his dear wife, Martha.

It occurred to him, one morning at breakfast, that he had no reason to believe that the light stayed on when he closed his eyes and he expressed that opinion to Martha while between the editorial page and the financial section.

"What was that, dear?" she asked blearily. Martha was invariably bleary in the mornings which was one of the factors contributing to Perkins' critical opinion of the

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connubial tie; another was that he had an antipathy for *large* women and Martha was rather more than twice his size, going pound for pound, of course, rather than by inches.

He enunciated clearly—and made it a point to *show* he was enunciating clearly—"I said that I have no reason to believe that the light stays on when I close my eyes."

"Oh." Martha went back to spreading a revoltingly thick layer of honey on her toast and Jeremiah Perkins returned to contemplation of the financial section.

"But, Jeremiah," his wife said finally. "Of course the light stays on when you close your eyes."

He lifted the eyes in question to hers and explained patiently, "I didn't say that it didn't, I merely stated that I have no reason to believe it does." His eyes went back to the stock market reports. "Which is an entirely different matter," he added.

Martha said weakly, "I don't believe I know *quite* what you mean, Jeremiah."

With an air of considerable patience, he put down the paper and stared at her through his heavy lensed pince-nez glasses. "Then I shall explain it very simply," he told her.

"You have possibly heard of persons who wondered whether or not the little light in the refrigerator remains on when the door of the refrigerator is closed."

"Oh, yes," Martha said with enthusiasm and nodded her head until her chins wobbled disgustingly. "Mrs. Klatz was telling us a joke at the bridge club only last week about—"

He stared at her coldly and she stopped telling him about Mrs. Klatz and said, "Yes, dear."

He went on, "Now there are various ways in which it can be demonstrated to an even moderately lucid person that the light does indeed go out when the refrigerator door is shut. One recommended method is to put a small child into the refrigerator and close the door. However, this system depends upon the veracity of the child and I personally am not inclined to gullibility. Much better is to cut a small window in the door of the refrigerator; then the person in doubt can himself observe what develops when the door of the refrigerator is closed. Do you understand thus far?"

She swallowed her current mouthful of honeyed bread hurriedly and said, "Yes, dear."

"Very well. Now my point was that while it can be proven satisfactorily that the light in the refrigerator does go off when the door is closed, I have no provable evidence that the light remains on when my eyes are closed."

She blinked at him, nearly spilling the cup of coffee she held in her plump right hand. He noted that, as usual, she'd filled her cup with quite as much heavy cream as with coffee.

He went on to elucidate further. "Suppose I enter a theatre during the day. What reason have I to believe that the sun remains on while I am inside?"

She offered hesitantly, "You could get up in the middle of the show and go and see."

Perkins snorted indignantly. "Don't you understand? If I did, by that time *they* would have turned it back on again."

He returned to his newspaper, closing the subject.

POSSIBLY the matter would have remained closed indefinitely had it not been for the fact that Mrs. Jeremiah Perkins noticed that her husband was evidently doing what he could in the way of checking upon his suspicions. For instance, that Sunday, while he was working down in the basement on his mushroom and toad-

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stool collection, she noted that from time to time he would dash hurriedly up the stairs to peer disgustedly out the kitchen window.

At lunch he muttered, to no one in particular, "I nearly caught it yesterday when I got off the subway two stations before my stop and went up to the street."

Even then, Martha, who was a more than usually cautious wife when it came to these things—and don't think such matters hadn't come up before—would have done nothing if he'd just gone on for a time and then forgotten about it. The trouble was, he didn't forget; in fact, he got worse. He was continually devising situations in which he would be out of sight of the sun; in a theatre, in a subway, in the basement, in some room without a window, in the attic; then, abruptly, he'd make a sudden dash to check on whether or not the sun remained on while he was out of range of its beams.

He seemed disappointed when it invariably did.

One night when they were seated in the living room after dinner, she offered quietly, "Why would *they* want to turn the light out when your eyes are closed or when you're in the cellar or the attic?"

He had been rereading the Kinsey report but he looked up impatiently to say, "How would I know? Possibly to conserve power."

Ordinarily she would have gone no further, since his tone was even more than usually petulant, but she steeled herself and said, "Who are *they*, dear?"

"Who are who?" he snapped. "If you must talk, please try to be coherent, Martha."

"Who are *they* who might turn out the light when your eyes are closed?"

He sighed deeply and closed his book, leaving a forefinger at the page where he'd left off. He took off his pince-nez glasses and said, "I haven't the vaguest idea. But whoever they are, I am rapidly arriving at the opinion that they are managing this whole project extremely inefficiently. *Extremely* so."

She'd gone too far now to back down, so she said, as placatingly as possible, "What project, dear?"

He looked at her for a long moment, his mouth tight with impatience. "Very well," he said finally, "I see you intend to maintain the pretense to the end. Undoubtedly, those are your instructions.

"I give you to realize, and your superiors as well, that I have been aware of the true nature of—shall we say? —this *world*, for some time."

SHE BEGAN to open her mouth to say something but he flicked a hand at her negatively and went on. "The big mistake has been in making it so obviously fantastic. Whoever is in ultimate charge, might have been more successful in deceiving me had the sum total of your efforts added up to a bit more plausibility."

"But, . . . Jeremiah . . :"

"Quiet please, until I finish, Martha. I have been aware for a considerable period that the sole reason for the existence of this so-called world and everyone in it, and all that goes on in it, has been to keep the true nature of things from me; to befuddle my mind and so confuse me that I remain unaware of actuality. Very well, I contend that the undertaking is being poorly administered. I admit that I don't really understand *why* this is being done, but whatever the reason it is quite slipshod, I assure you. Quite."

He replaced his glasses on the bridge of his nose and went back to his book, obviously content to leave the subject at that point.

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But Martha was inordinately valiant tonight. She said,—"What is fantastic, Jeremiah? I don't believe I understand quite what—"

He sighed deeply once again, placed his book on the tea table before him and returned his glasses to his pocket.

"Almost everything," he said quietly. For a moment he looked as though he'd forgotten her, that he was talking to himself. His eyes went to the ceiling and he continued softly, "Almost all of it is utterly fantastic.

"Take, for instance, our governmental and social systems. Is there a sane one on earth?"

"You shouldn't speak against the government, dear," she said primly, evidently feeling fairly sure of herself on this point.

"The socio-economic system of this country is fantastic in the extreme," he said, ignoring her. "You would think it impossible that a more ridiculous one could exist; but all you have to do is look to England to find it. Of course, when you get to the Soviet Union things degenerate into absolute burlesque.

"But that isn't enough; where the whole project really becomes absurd to the point of extravaganza is the relationship between individuals. Take the relation between the sexes as the classic example. It would be difficult to imagine anything more utterly farcial than that two persons—such as you and I, for instance—should fall in love, whatever that is supposed to be, and remain in juxtaposition with each other for the balance of their lives. The supposed ultimate purpose of this, of course, is the breeding of further 'humans' to continue the insanity of it all."

Martha began crying.

"Please," he snapped. "I shall develop the point no further. I merely wished to make it clear that I *know*, that I realize it is all a farce and that you are part of the farce. You may continue playing your part. . . ."

HE TOOK his glasses from his pocket, rearranged them carefully on his nose again and returned to the findings of Dr. Kinsey. "I am surprised that *they* allowed the printing of this book," he remarked in general.

After a lengthy period of sobbing to which he remained immune, Martha dried her eyes bravely and stammered, "Possibly you should see a doctor, dear."

Without looking up, her husband informed her, "I was expecting that suggestion momentarily. Please don't bother to mention it again."

"Yes, dear. But, Jeremiah—"

He put his book down for the third time and closed his eyes for a long moment. Finally he opened them and looked at her severely. "Martha," he said, "I consider myself a more than average tolerant person; however, I am becoming extremely weary of this conversation. I will repeat my conclusions once more, then I wish to hear no more about it.

"The question of whether or not the light remains on is comparatively unimportant although admittedly it has intrigued me. The important consideration is that I am aware of the nature of this so-called world and its inhabitants and I am not deceived."

He shifted around in his chair so that his back was to her and reached out for his book again.

"Very well," Martha said, "if you are not deceived, there is little reason to carry on the attempted deception."

"None at all," he muttered testily.

So Martha dissolved into her true shape and slithered across the living room floor and out the front door to report to her superiors.

Jeremiah Perkins didn't bother to look up as she left.

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HOW TO BEAT THE HORSES

By SANDY MILLER

THE HUMAN brain is still superior to all the mechanical brains in existence today. This despite the fact that among the mechanical gadgets on the market there are electronic brains that can figure out a factory payroll, work out equations that would take a human brain more than a lifetime to solve, and tap out mathematical tables on electric typewriters. They can even figure out instructions and perform by memory, plus solving a variety of other problems whose solution has heretofore been strictly in the human province.

But, by comparison with men, the robit is still a first-class moron.

Mathematicians predict that some day machines will be perfected which may be faster and more accurate than any human brain could ever be—due, primarily, to lack of the emotional element. With techniques not available, such a machine will undoubtedly play a perfect game of chess, maybe transcribe letters from dictation—perhaps even mind the baby.

And maybe it'll even be able to beat the roulette wheel—who can tell?

YOU "TALK" TOO MUCH

By CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT

THE MOST necessary part of human society is communication. Without it, no organized human society could exist. The earliest efforts at communication were doubtless outgrowths of the herd instinct.

All animals have some form of communication which is not only understood by all members of the pack, but also by other species living in similar surroundings. It's obvious that the danger signals of one are understood by all. The snort of a deer denotes the scent of a common enemy. The warning call of the elephant silences all the animals of the jungle and informs them of approaching danger. The sudden flight of the tick birds prepares the rhinoceros for instant battle. These are instinctive impulses; experience has taught the animal that he must obey them as a matter of self-preservation.

Man has inherited, and still obeys, the instinctive impulses of his primitive ancestors. It is only reasonable to suppose that before the development of articulate speech and the power of reason, he followed the urge of instinctive protection as a means of self-preservation.

It is largely a matter of conjecture and speculation as to the warning signals used by man before articulate speech was developed. However, study of the instinctive impulses of the lower animals and of man, and examinations of the development of the earliest known human skulls, show that primitive man must have traveled in herds and been guided and directed by instinctive impulses in much the same manner as are the wild animals of today.

Emotions of both fear and anger will cause the hair of many animals literally to stand on end. This nervous reflex is accompanied by a warning growl. The purpose of this is, perhaps, to present the most hideous appearance to the approaching enemy and to warn it of the danger of an attack. Dogs will bare their teeth, raise their hair, stiffen their muscles, and growl before beginning a fight. A bull will bellow, paw and horn the earth, and stiffen his muscles before beginning an attack. These are animal means of communicating warnings of a purpose to overcome their enemies by means of force and with the natural weapons that they possess.

A single word was used to express an idea when articulate speech was in its infancy. Many of the first words coined were used to represent some imitative sound, and articulate sounds were applied to represent certain objects or things; thus these objects or things were recognized by certain names.

To primitive man, the word "deer" meant "I see a deer", or "There is a deer." If his companions could not see the animal, then the one uttering the sound indicated the position or direction of the deer from the group by pointing his arm or finger in the direction of the deer. It was in this pantomime manner that signalling became a means of communicating ideas by primitive man. But there were times when natural objects obscured the vision of the group of hunters, so that pointing was of little or no use. This led, then, to the invention of sound signals that could be heard but not seen. And this, in turn, to the development of languages as we know them today.

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MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

By Wallace Umphrey

You think those are really space ships in the sky? Look again...

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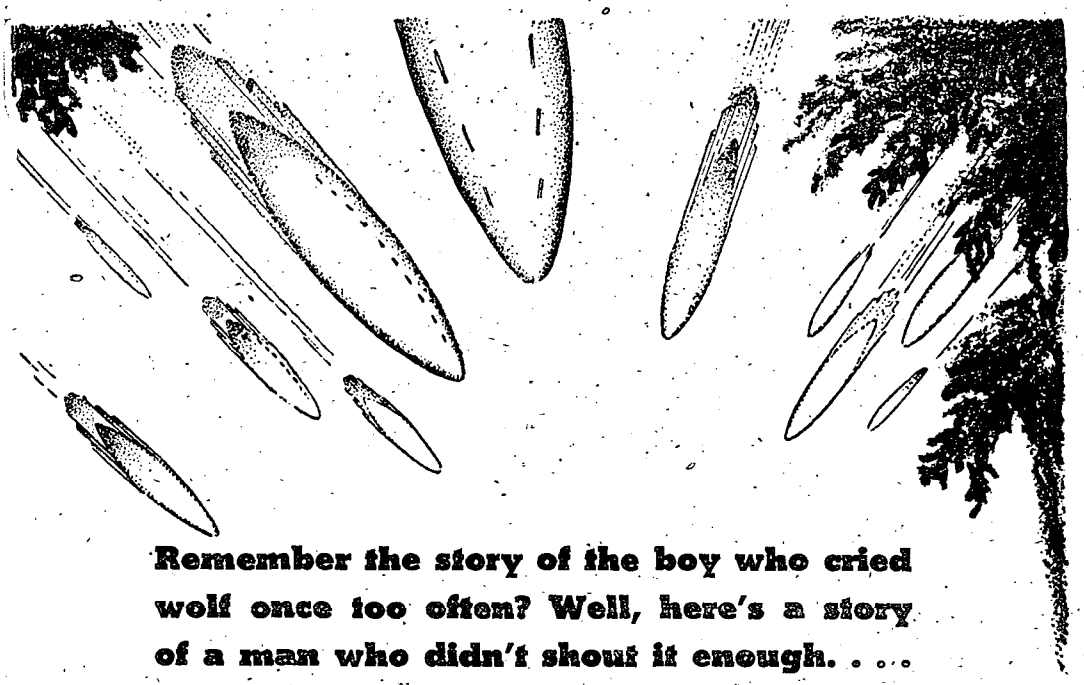

Remember the story of the boy who cried wolf once too often? Well, here's a story of a man who didn't shout it enough. . . .

WHEN THE ship from Sweden docked, the newsmen surrounded Thor Maritan, who was one of their own kind, and asked him how he felt after winning a Nobel Peace Prize; and they completely ignored the little professor who stood beaming in the background.

Thor Maritan grinned. How did he feel? No different. Maybe a hell of a lot richer—for a working newspaperman.

They liked that. They liked his humility. They liked everything about him. He made a lot of money but he gave it away to charity. There was no greed, no jealousy, no avarice in him.

He was a big, blond young man with a magnetic personality. He made friends easily, and both his prose style

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and his personality radiated conviction. His syndicated column on world affairs was read by millions, and the Hooper rating on his weekly telecast was always tops.

Somebody slapped him on the back. "Tell us more, Maritan. This is the first time a peace prize was ever awarded for pulling the biggest hoax in history."

Maritan laughed, and then sobered quickly.

"You're all forgetting," he said humbly, jerking a thumb at the little man who stood behind him, "that I only shared in the prize. Professor Hilder really did all the work. He was the one who spotted the space fleet from Mars."

Some of the newsmen chuckled. Professor Hilder stepped shyly forward, a small man wearing a wrinkled suit who would have looked more at home wearing a smock in his observatory. His glance rested on Thor Maritan for a long moment, and his trust was articulated in his eyes. That's the way Thor Maritan seemed to affect everybody.

"My good friend underestimates himself," Hilder said. "I'm nothing but a crackpot astronomer. It was he who proved to me that the space fleet was really only a mirage, but that we might utilize its apparent reality to bring peace to the world."

The newsmen applauded. They formed a ring around Thor Maritan and Professor Hilder and hurled questions at them. A flashbulb exploded. Finally Maritan held up a hand.

"I've got to run along," he said gently. "My managing editor is expecting me. He'll be firing on all eight ulcers if I don't show up."

The circle opened for him and he went down the gangplank and climbed into a waiting cab. Behind him he left an air of kinship, of conviviality, a sense of well-being. Nobody was irked at his sudden departure; nobody ever held him any ill-will. Thor Maritan had yet to make his first enemy.

"I don't get it," said one of the newsmen, watching the cab depart. "He's got so many fine points and nothing on the debit side. It's not human."

"The finest man I've ever met."

"This may sound stupid, but he's just like the God they told me about in Sunday School."

"Sure...that's it," the newsmen assented gravely.

Professor Hilder interrupted. "It's strange," he murmured. "I know just what you all mean. He always affects me the same way. But after he's gone...maybe when I start thinking logically again—well, I'm a little afraid. It's like I've been hypnotized by his presence."

A newsman slapped him on the back. "It's his magnetic personality."

Hilder smiled good-naturedly. "Maybe so. A man can get funny ideas staring off into space. It's like the fleet from Mars—"

He shook his head. "Everybody's heard about it."

They all nodded. The whole world knew now.

IT WAS Professor Hilder who had first seen the space fleet approaching the earth. At first he wouldn't let himself believe it, remembering the era of the flying saucers. It was while he was still a boy, and nobody yet had proved whether or not they were real. So he kept quiet and tracked the fleet for two nights across the vast reaches of the sky; he computed the fleet's probable course and then he called the newspaper for which Thor Maritan worked.

And it wasn't odd that he should call Thor Maritan's paper. He'd met Maritan for the first time that night he saw the space fleet in his telescope.

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Even the circumstances under which he met Thor Maritan didn't seem odd.

He was out for an evening stroll, and suddenly he was talking to a stranger. It was Thor Maritan. Hilder didn't know exactly how it happened; he rarely talked to strangers. But it somehow seemed to him that he'd known Maritan all his life.

Of course he'd heard about Thor Maritan. Newspaperman, syndicated columnist, telecaster. Maritan was a legend; even though some of the stories about him were apocryphal the legend was in no way tarnished. Thor Maritan never slept; he was God's image on earth; he walked the streets and talked to everybody so that he knew better than any poll what the little people thought.

Hilder and Maritan talked about politics and world conditions. And then Maritan asked about the possibility of an attack by an alien world.

That same night Hilder first saw the space fleet.

He called Thor Maritan's paper, and Maritan himself came out to have a look. Word had got around and other reporters showed up. They scoffed; but not Thor Maritan. One of them looked and then complained he could see nothing.

"Let me look," Thor Maritan said.

He looked. "It's there," he said.

The reporter looked again. "I'll be damned," he said in a dumbfounded sort of way. "So it is. Must've missed it the first time, though I don't see how."

All looked, and they all saw it.

"Will it attack Earth?" Maritan asked.

Professor Hilder was bewildered. "Who can say?"

"We can say," Thor Maritan said.

The reporters left filled with awe and excitement. But their editors only laughed; it was impossible. If it weren't for the world tension, they might run a tongue-in-cheek article. But under the circumstances....

THE WORLD was an armed camp. It was what it had been for so long a time: the Eastern bloc of nations against the West. Blow cold, blow hot. It was getting hotter now. Both sides were arming to the teeth. A spark would touch it off. "You don't make weapons except to fight with," somebody said, and it was true. And this time a war would finish the earth.

Thor Maritan's paper alone ran the article. He featured it in his syndicated column. And he devoted one whole telecast to the ravaging fleet from Mars.

Some people believed; some did not.

Several astronomers trained their telescopes on the computed course of the space fleet and saw nothing. Thor Maritan advised them to watch and listen to his next telecast. They did; and then they went back to their 'scopes and the fleet was there.

"It's mass hypnotism," a psychologist warned. "Mass hypnotism is nothing new. There was the business about the saucers—"

"Read my next column," Thor Maritan advised him.

The psychologist read it and was convinced.

World leaders begged for sanity; forget the impossible, they said. It was a trick of some kind by the enemy. And then they looked into their own hearts and knew they spoke in platitudes.

Telescopes all over Earth tracked the fleet from out of space.

"We've got to work together," the world leaders said. "We have our differences, but at least we have a common bond. At least we're human."

Differences were put aside, if not forgotten. Nations worked in harmony; at last the world had found a

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common denominator. And swiftly even the differences were forgotten. So many of them had been based on a stupid premise.

THE SPACE fleet drew closer, and the world frantically armed itself. World leaders formed a unified government, pledging full support and a pact of nonagression. And then the space fleet was visible to the naked eye. Man looked upward and pondered his fate.

"You take it so calmly," Hilder said to Thor Maritan. "You believe in peace and good-fellowship. How can you remain calm?"

"Watch my telecast tonight," Thor Maritan said.

"I don't understand."

Maritan grinned. "I'll give you a secret preview. The space fleet is only a mirage."

"A *what!*" Hilder gasped.

"A mirage. It will disappear."

"I don't believe it! There's no precedent—a mirage in the sky!"

"You'll see," Thor Maritan said.

Professor Hilder sank weakly into a chair and put his hands over his eyes. Something stirred inside him; and then he knew quite suddenly that he believed. He didn't know *why*, but at the moment the reason seemed unimportant. Faith simply came into his mind.

And Thor Maritan repeated it all on his telecast. The world listened. And Thor Maritan told more: It had all been a giant hoax. He himself had known all along that it was a mirage but he had utilized it to bring peace to a tortured world.

Few wondered how he knew.

"Destroy your weapons," he said. "Weapons only lead to war. Peace on earth and good will to all men."

The world laughed joyfully, and there were few dissenting voices. It had been a tremendous hoax; but it was the kind of joke at which men could laugh. And relief was in their laughter. Thor Maritan was called the new Messiah, a tag to which he objected. He didn't want to sit at the head of the world government. His humility was there on every telescreen.

He and Professor Hilder shared the Nobel Peace Prize. It was a token prize; never again would it have to be awarded. The world basked in its newfound freedom from fear.

THE HOAX became a world myth; children were told about it in their playpens and over their morning pablum. Man lived in peace and harmony with his neighbors. Psychologists began talking about fear being bred from mankind.

There were still dissenting voices, but they went unheard. Some men of science still wanted to know *why*. How could a space fleet be a mirage?

And how had Thor Maritan known?

But all vehicles of communication were closed to them; and their questions were silenced by the new religion. It was not a new religion, strictly—but rather a universal realization of the positive values inherent in earlier religions. Peace. The brotherhood of man.

"It's dangerous," a few small voices tried to say. "The world is lulled into a false security. Some day there may come an attack from outer space—"

They were laughed down. Thor Maritan still wrote his compelling prose; still projected his magnetic personality on millions of telescreens. He preached the new religion. Peace on earth and good will to all mankind.

It was more pleasant to believe than to doubt.

"I'm frightened," Professor Hilder said to Thor Maritan. "I know you as well as anybody. I'm not questioning your faith. But sometimes I question your good sense."

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Maritan stretched out his long legs. He grinned. And quite suddenly Hilder felt ashamed of himself. He felt the urge to apologize for his lack of understanding.

"If you're right," Thor Maritan said gently, "I'll take the blame."

It was only after he was gone that Hilder felt some of his doubts return. He was no match, like everybody else, for Thor Maritan's magnetic personality. Perhaps Maritan was, after all, a spiritual rebirth. But still...

Hilder stopped reading Thor Maritan's column and watching his telecast. He began concentrating on his own work, spending long hours in his tiny observatory. A strange anxiety, almost an expectancy dwelt with him. He felt an odd conviction, perhaps without reason, that history was going to repeat itself.

He kept his telescope trained on the spot where the space fleet had first appeared.

And then he saw it again.

FEAR. FEAR was in him now. He kept himself shut away from all outside contact, so that the delicate balance of his mind would be undisturbed. He watched. And watched.

The space fleet swung closer.

He tracked it with his 'scope.

Closer.

Soon it would be visible to the naked eye.

Frantically he telephoned Thor Maritan. And Maritan came, wearing his magnetic personality like a halo.

"Look!" Hilder whispered, gesturing toward the eyepiece of the telescope.

"I don't have to look," Maritan said.

"Why not?"

"It's another mirage."

Hilder was trembling. Thor Maritan sat down easily, his long legs stretched out in front of him. Professor Hilder went over to stand before him. He stretched his arms in entreaty.

"This time it's real," he said. "Don't ask me how I know. But this time I've been out from under your influence. You're gifted with the ability to create a mass illusion—don't ask me how I know that either. The world is your responsibility now—you made it what it is today."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Warn mankind."

"You're being foolish."

"If there's the slightest possibility of attack," Hilder cried, "the world must be prepared!"

Thor Maritan grinned. "Suppose you're right—an idea I reject. Do you think the world would believe me? Man doesn't like to think himself stupid. Will he fall for the same gag the second time?" He gently shook his head. "They'd laugh at you and at me too. Isn't there a fable about the boy who cried wolf?"

HILDER SANK down into the nearest chair, stunned by the logic of it all. Maybe a sucker was born every minute, but even a sucker never bit twice. Kick a hat with a brick under it on April First, and you didn't repeat the stunt. Let somebody give you a hotfoot and you didn't leave yourself open again.

"Look in the telescope," he whispered. "Tell me what you see. And then tell me again you won't try to warn the world of disaster!"

Maritan threw back his head and laughed. "I won't be a part of your little fantasy."

"You're insane."

Thor Maritan laughed.

"You aren't God," Hilder said. "They've built you up so that now you believe it yourself. You believe in your own infallibility. They've given you a destiny-ego."

"I'm going now," Maritan said, standing up. "Tell the world your

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fears. And see if the world believes you. They'll look up and see the space fleet and then laugh at the fantastic product of their own minds."

Professor Hilder struggled to his feet; his whole body shook. He felt his heart beating wildly in the cage of his chest. Thor Maritan bent an amused gaze upon him. And Hilder felt strange fingers plucking at his mind.

He fought against it. Thor Maritan must be shown his lack of wisdom. For Maritan alone had the power to make the world believe. The mantle of the Messiah hadn't fallen lightly on his shoulders after all; his humility was a pose. Now he considered himself omnipotent.

"I'll tell the world!" Hilder cried out in an agony of spirit. "I'll find a way to make them understand!"

Thor Maritan wasn't amused now; the gentle laughter was gone from his eyes. Professor Hilder staggered suddenly, clutching at his chest. He slumped into a chair, his breathing harsh and ragged. His face was mottled; and then he slid forward and his head lolled on the chair arm.

"The strain," Maritan said gently, aloud. "It was too much for him."

He knelt, picking up the limp wrist; the pulse was gone. Standing up, he backed toward the door. Then he went outside and climbed into his car.

Too bad, he told himself, heading for the outskirts. The professor was a nice little guy.

He stopped the car in a stretch of heavy woods, and he quite easily found the tiny compact transmitter which he had hidden so long ago.

Above him in the sky he could see the faint trail of the space fleet.

"Lieutenant Thor Martian reporting," he said in an alien tongue. "Mission accomplished. Earth may be taken without violence."

THE END

FROM OUT OF THE PAST • • •

"THERE WAS something very impressive," Arthur Evans wrote when his excavators, in digging up the Minoan palace, found the life-sized painted figure of a cupbearer, "in this vision of brilliant youth and of male beauty recalled after so long an interval to our upper air from what had been till yesterday a forgotten world. Even our untutored workmen felt the spell and fascination. They... regarded... the painting in the bosom of the Earth as nothing less than miraculous and saw in it the 'ikon' of a Saint."

The figure was that of a boy holding a gold and silver cup. His right hand was holding the handle, his left was on the base of the cup. The boy's body was straining backward, indicating that the cup must have been heavy. He was dressed in patterned loincloth and girdle, and wore two silver armlets on his left arm and a bracelet on his right wrist.

This figure, together with other paintings that Evans' excavations found, reconstructed the physical appearance of the Minoans: small, dark, clean-shaven, narrow-waisted, with small hands and feet. They usually had full lips and what we today call Grecian profiles, and dark curly hair ornately done up.

And then one day Evans found the fragments of a stucco relief which he felt sure depicted somebody of royal blood. When the painting was finally put together, Evans' assumptions were confirmed by its details.

An actual King of Cnossos—his name and personal history lost in the corridors of the past. He was young and graceful—this king—and carried about him a gaiety and strength and majesty. He is shown running through a meadow thick with flowers; right hand on his chest, the other stretched downward. Since only part of the left arm was preserved, what it had been carrying is unknown. A broad necklace of flowers is around his neck, and his head is crowned with the same flowers topped by three large peacock's feathers rising in a grand sweep.

The various sacred details of the painting—among them, the field of lilies and the crown of lilies—obviously points to the identity of the young man. —*Merritt Linn*

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HOME SWEET HOME...

By Salem Lane

SINCE man first conceived the idea of changing the forms of Nature so that they are more suited to his use, every step in human progress has been motivated by a desire to eliminate time and shorten space, and to add to his comfort, convenience and happiness. The modern home is the best example of a collection of the developed thoughts of the ages and their application to comfort, convenience, and to the happiness of those who share it.

Take the house itself: this is made of vitrified bricks, cut and molded in the same shapes as those of the ancient Babylonians. They are bound together with mortar of sand and cement. By baking the clay bricks in a furnace under high temperatures for a long period of time, the builders have learned that the clay will become vitrified and more durable, so the sun-dried bricks of the ancients have been discarded. The roof is made of asbestos shingles. This material has supplanted the dried skins of animals used by primitive man, the shingle or clapboard roofs of our grandfathers, the tin and tile roofs of more recent years, since asbestos is lighter, more durable, fireproof, more permanent, not affected by the elements. Windows are larger and more artistically arranged, providing for maximum light and ventilation. Architecture and landscaping are designs of beauty.

Inside the house is a piano—an instrument representing centuries of growth and many applications of new ideas. It is the evoluted form of the vibration of the bowstring first observed by some primitive ancestor when civilization was still in an embryonic stage. It is the compounded principle of the harp of the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Greeks, the lute of the Middle Ages, the harpsichord of our grandfathers.

The characters on the sheet music whose symbolic meaning must be understood and followed, in order that melody and harmony may be developed, represent the evolution of the universal language that gives to music its interpretation.

Radio and television—developed in our own generation—are the greatest of all modern miracles. They gather vibrations from the ether waves, and reproduce for the listener almost anything he chooses to hear or see.

The telephone is the evoluted idea of the primitive system of signalling wherein human thought was first conveyed beyond the range of the voice by means of drums or the brush fires on the hilltops.

The fire in the fireplace is natural gas, the only perfect fuel known to civilization. The first spark of fire struck from a piece of flint by our primitive ancestors that started combustion in some dry substance was the beginning of this cycle of developing heat that ends in the living room grate.

The modern clock has passed through a series of developments. Perhaps the earliest effort made by man in solving the problem of dividing time was in the use of the sun-dial, or shadow clock. But like the early attempt at communication by the signalling system, the sun-dial was useless at night and on cloudy days. Next came the fire clock, the water clock, and the hour-glass. The Chinese, Greeks, and Romans used the water clocks, and during the Middle Ages the weight clock came into use. The next step in the evolution of the clock was the use of the pendulum. And finally evolved the clock as we know it today.

The use of electricity has supplanted the grease lamp and the tallow candle and the kerosene lamp. Not only does this energy furnish light, but it also furnishes power to run the washing machine, sewing machine, vacuum cleaner, fan, refrigerator, radio, stove, and various other electrical devices.

Human society has thus been bound together, each person or group of people depending on the other. Each generation leaving something that the previous generation did not have. This is human progress—the cultural evolution of mankind.

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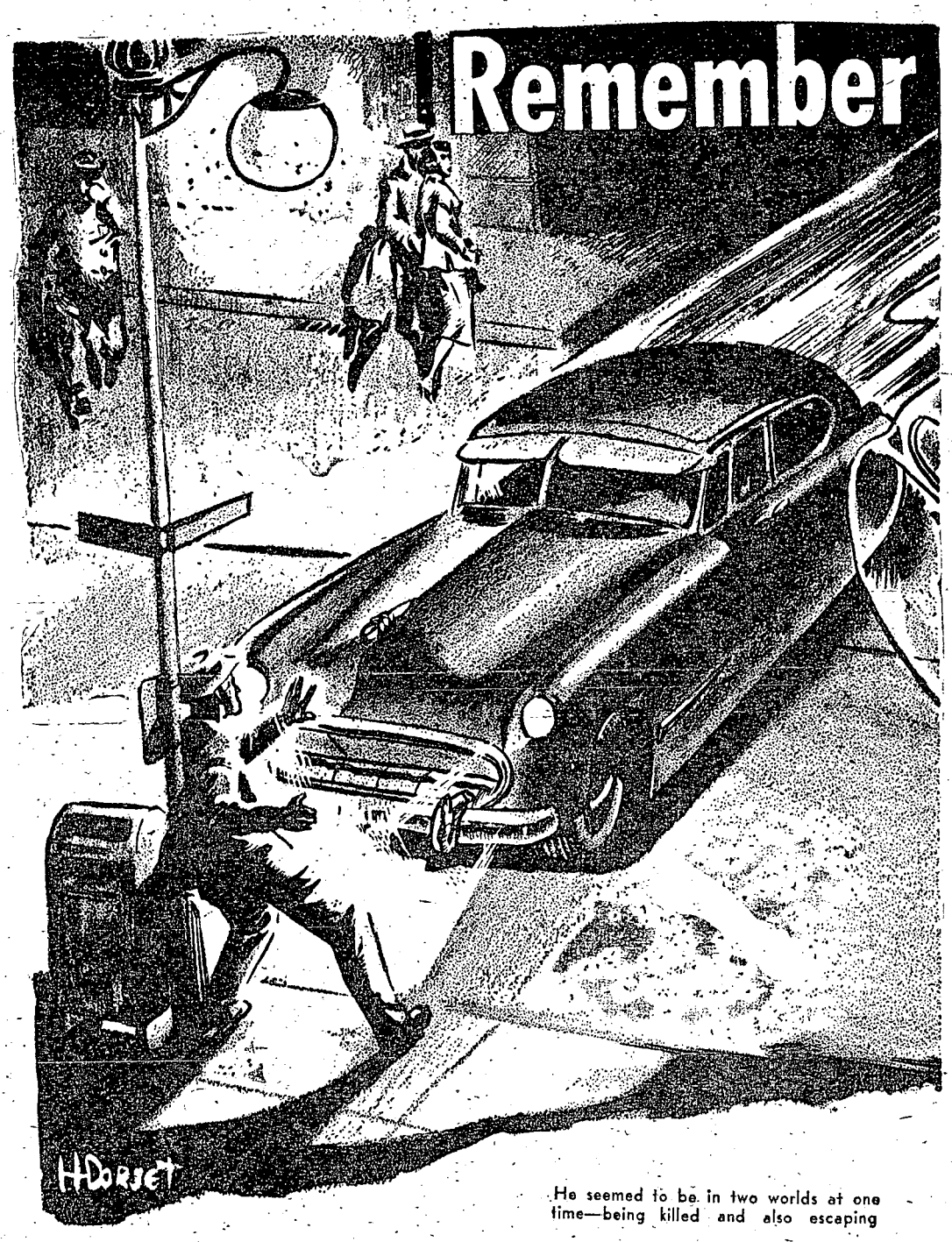
I Remember



He seemed to be in two worlds at one time—being killed and also escaping

The asteroid hurled straight for Earth, and destruction seemed only hours away. But as long as Don ate hamburger instead of hash, there was still a chance all would be okay

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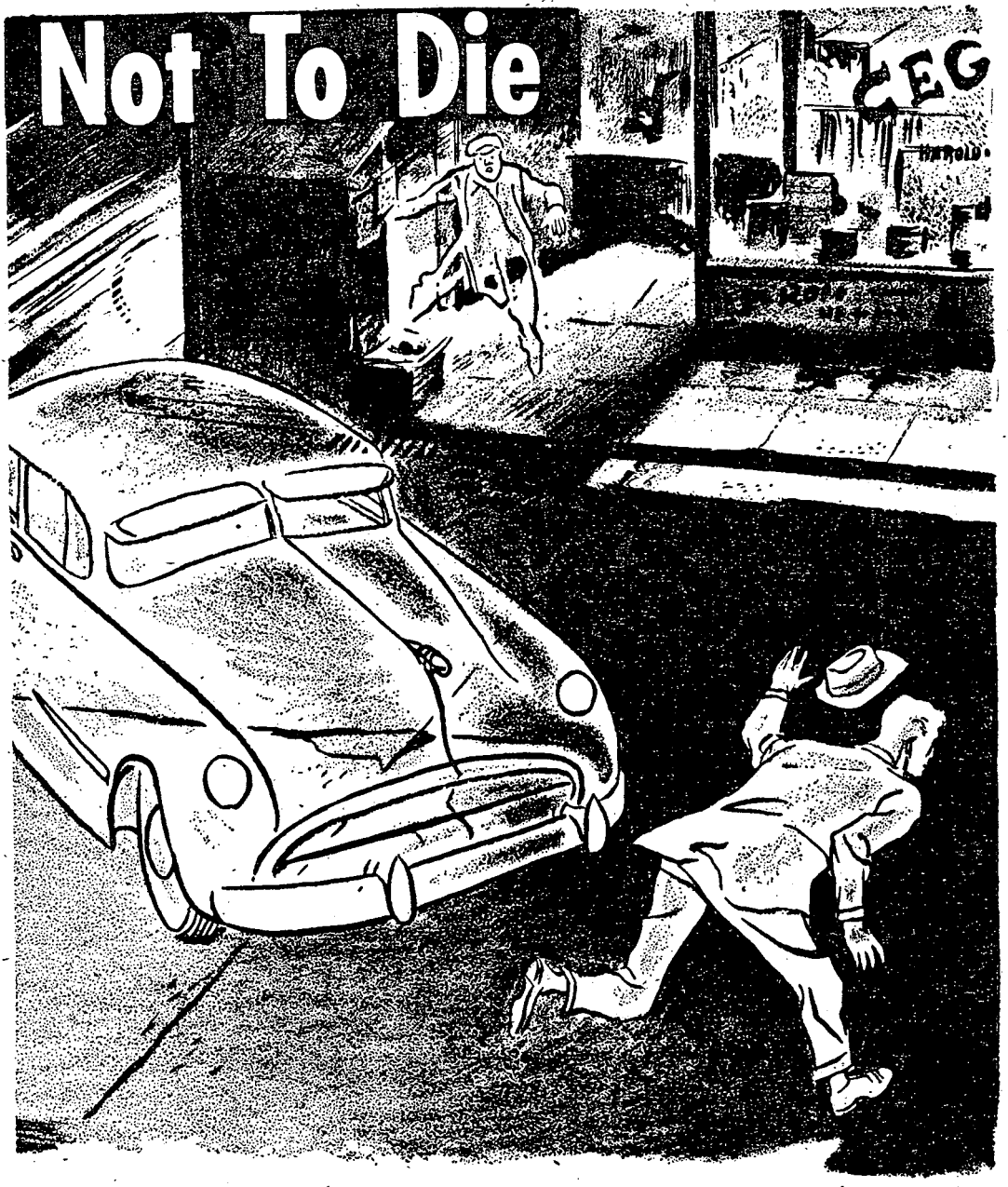
Not To Die



By Rog Phillips

DON SMITH started to step into the elevator, then paused. A feeling had settled on him that something was going to happen. The operator, face pale, was staring at him. The car was already quite full. The passengers were tense, silent.

Almost as though they, too, had the same feeling of impending disaster.

Don tried to reach out in his mind

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and bring the feeling closer. It seemed quite definite. The car was going to get stuck. Between the ninth and tenth floors. It would be an hour before the passengers would be freed.

He shrugged off the feeling and stepped into the car. Only fools were the slaves of hunches.

The fat woman next to him looked up into his face with a half pleading look. She was going to faint from the heat before it was over, Don knew. And from her expression she knew it too. Or was his imagination painting that expression on her round fat face?

The operator closed the car door, and when his hand came away from the handle it left a wet print. Nervous perspiration? The car started, and suddenly Don knew that everyone in the car had the same feeling of disaster.

The car picked up speed.

"Floors?" the operator said.

"Eight," a male voice said. Then, resignedly, "No, make it eleven."

Don smiled tightly. The owner of that voice was going through the same mental strain he was himself, knowing what was going to happen, yet refusing to accept it.

There was a row of numbers above the doors. A small light was jumping from one to the next. Five Six. Seven . . . Some of the passengers had their eyes glued to that light.

From somewhere above the car a loud rattling sounded abruptly. The car jerked to a stop. A blank wall covered the expanse in front of the elevator, with the bottom four inches of the doors of the tenth floor visible at the top.

"Well," the operator sighed, "it happened." And Don had known he was going to say that.

The passengers shifted as though relaxing. None of them had quite nerve enough to come right out and say he had known. Yet Don was sure they all had known it, just as he had.

A hunch? It was more like—he cast about in his mind for a more exact term—like memory of the future. That's what it was! It was like a memory of something that had already happened. But of course it couldn't be that, or at least it couldn't be universal. No one driving a car, for instance, who had ploughed into a light pole could have avoided it really. No man would deliberately drive to his death if he knew it was coming! Or would he? After all, Don reflected, the driver of that car could have known and refused to believe that he knew. It would be utterly silly to suddenly refuse to drive your car ever again because of a hunch that the next time you'd be killed.

The air in the car was beginning to get stuffy. It would be a while before an attempt was made to free them.

Don edged away from the fat woman, then caught himself and relaxed. When she fainted she would slump straight down with a low moan.

"This clinches it," he decided. "I can see into the future. Now I've got to warn the world of this presentiment that's been nagging me these past few days. The world is going to end in exactly two weeks. It has to, because I *remember* it just as vividly as I *remembered* all this before it happened."

THE PEOPLE in the elevator were cautious. They pretended they had been surprised at the accident. Don Smith decided to do the same.

A part of his mind seemed to stand aside and watch, and study. It wasn't bad, saying things you seemed to remember saying. It was like the dress rehearsal of a play in which you already know your lines and recognize your cues. And everyone had a frightened look deep in his eyes, that could

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be from a *memory* that the world would snuff out in two weeks.

"I wonder what they would say," Don mused, "if I were to suddenly say, 'Look here. You all know as well as I do that in two weeks something bigger than the moon will hit the world so hard that in the twinkling of an eye it will all be over.' Would they nod their heads and say they knew it too? Or would the play-acting go on, and would they pretend I was a crackpot?"

He started to say it. One of the male passengers caught his eye and said, "I wonder how long it will be before we get out of this box?"

Don, taking his cue, shrugged his shoulders. "All I hope is they don't knock off for lunch five minutes before they get the elevator going again."

It was a little eerie, he decided. Almost like a great actor on a stage, with thousands of people in the audience listening to him say, "To be or not to be, that is the question..." The great actor theoretically could say, "To be—but who gives a damn!" It would ruin his career, but he could say it even though he never did.

The fat woman fainted. Everyone crowded over to the sides to give her room to sprawl out. They did it as though by prearrangement. The operator said, "Oh, gawd," as though it had taken him by surprise.

Echoing up the shaft and through the elevator floor came shouted words. "What's the matter up there? Stuck?"

"Yeah," the operator shouted. "Do something about it—fast!"

Finally whatever was wrong was fixed and the elevator moved slowly up to the tenth floor where a doctor was waiting to revive the fat woman and a lawyer and the building manager were anxiously coaxing the passengers to sign papers stating the delay hadn't done any damage. Didn't they know it wouldn't make any difference? No damage suit could get into court in two weeks! But then again, Don decided, no business manager of a building would risk his job on a fantastic *memory* of the world ending in two weeks.

He signed the paper and hurried down the hall to another elevator which took him on up to the fifteenth floor where he paid his life insurance. Not until he had paid the premium did he stop to think, "Why did I do that?"

He felt a little foolish about it, then remembered that he had had a pre-memory of doing it. He frowned and hastily reviewed everything he had done since waking up that morning with the whole future, what there was of it, etched into his mind. And he couldn't remember a single thing he had done which violated the pattern of pre-memory.

Intent on this he opened the door and stepped out into the hall. A hurrying man bumped against him, and at the same instant Don remembered that it had happened, but that it had slipped his mind. The man gave him a split second apologetic look and hurried on.

Don watched him go, pondering the new aspect of the thing. Quite obviously some of the things that were going to happen slipped the mind just like memories of—things that had already happened.

"Come to think of it," he reflected, "I have no memory of going to the newspaper and telling them the world is going to end. So if I do, it will mean I have changed what will happen."

Could he change anything? Or would it be as impossible as changing the past? He went slowly down the hall to the elevator.

"If I went back and demanded my insurance payment back, that would change what happens," he reflected.

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He thought of this, then decided it would be simpler to change something else.

He looked at his watch. It was early for lunch yet, but he knew he was going into the restaurant across the street from the building he was in, was going to sit at the fourth seat from the front end of the counter, just vacated by a middle aged woman with a shopping bag, and order corned beef hash. He could *remember* doing that as vividly as any memory of the past had ever been.

"So why shouldn't I order something else?" he murmured.

He became intrigued by the idea of deliberately changing what his pre-memory told him would happen. He would do it once, then again, and after a few successes he would change everything.

THE MIDDLE aged woman with the shopping bag was rising as he entered the restaurant. She smiled at him as though she knew him, then went toward the door. He sat down and picked up the menu.

A few minutes later the waitress came toward him. He had decided to order the hamburger steak. It would be a little change from the pattern of pre-memory, but it would be momentous in its importance.

"What'll you have?" the girl said. She hadn't said it as though she already knew. That would make it simpler.

He opened his mouth to say hamburger steak.

"Corned beef hash," were the words that came out.

The pencil in the girl's hand scribbled on the pad. She tore off the sheet and turned away.

Don tried to shout "Wait!" But his voice had gone dead and his hands were idly placing a cigarette in his mouth.

He could feel the damp perspiration on his forehead from the effort he was making to shout after the departing waitress, but his face, he knew, was calm.

He lit the cigarette and leaned back, giving up the effort to change things. So it wasn't like an actor on a stage repeating memorized lines! It was more like a movie that has been taken and is showing on the screen. He felt now he hadn't seriously thought of a mixture of irritation and fear. Until that *memory* of the world coming to an end in two weeks.

But now, suddenly, it took on the same flavor of inexorableness as his ordering of corned beef hash. When it was set before him he ate it, acutely conscious of the seeming certainty that every least movement of his fork and fingers was as unchangeable as the sun in its course through the universe.

"There's one thing," he reflected. "My attempt to say hamburger was an unknown, because I can remember it now; but couldn't beforehand. A part of my mind, the part *I* consist of, is still free, but it can't affect any other part. All I did by trying to order a hamburger steak was shatter the illusion that the things I do are dictated by *me*."

Or was that true? Don thought of a few things he knew about memory. Unpleasant things are usually forgotten quicker than pleasant things. Maybe pre-memory would work the same way. If that were so, then this schism between will and motor centers had been *remembered* but thrust into subconsciousness like the name of a girl he had gone with once who had done him a particularly dirty trick, so that even when told what her name was he promptly forgot it again in a few moments.

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But even now he couldn't recall having known about it, and the ex-girlfriend's name he recognized each time he heard it. There was a strong possibility that this effort to change things was new. If so, maybe it could actually change some physical act.

It was worth trying, if for no other reason than to take his thoughts off the fact that he had only two weeks to live. He nodded grimly in decision, then wondered if perhaps the nod were something new.

But that was the trouble with memory. It wasn't complete enough. Even memory of the past didn't include every nod of the head and movement of each finger. And some memories were false...

He sighed and stood up, leaving a quarter tip. On the way to the cash register he wondered if the girl already knew how much her tips for the day would be, and if she would have been a quarter short if he hadn't left a tip.

AFTER LEAVING the restaurant, he started walking. His pre-memory told him he was going to the park and sit on a bench. He did that without protest, and dove into the entire problem of the future.

He knew that after he left the park he was going to buy a paper, and the paper was going to tell him that a new body had been sighted in the heavens, heading toward the Earth's orbit. The author of the new article would be very cautious and estimate that although the body would pass close to the Earth the chances of an actual collision were remote.

The article would go on to say that there were many very strange things about the body. It was small, but its path proved it had tremendous mass. It had already perturbed Jupiter more than its own path was distorted by that giant planet.

And spectroscopic analysis of it was not only uncertain, but totally different with each spectrum picture. In the same picture the spectrum showed it to be approaching at several different speeds and receding at several different speeds. The article would conclude with the statement that it was altogether the most mysterious visitor from the void that astronomers had ever recorded.

The paper would also contain predictions of sports experts on the races, and they would ignore pre-memory completely. The experts would go through their routine analysis of the basis of their predictions, and ignore their "hunches".

After the restaurant episode Don realized that they wouldn't be able to do anything else. Life would go on as it had, with no visible sign that everyone in the world knew exactly what the future held. Though every newspaper editor knew for a fact that the world was going to end, he would call anyone who came in and said so a crackpot and throw him out.

The mysterious visitor from space was obviously the cause of pre-memory. Some field that surrounded it, perhaps. It was small and had tremendous mass. Maybe its space-time continuum had warped time itself in some unfathomable way.

Take pre-memory, for example, Don mused. Memory comes from things that happen impinging on the mind. He was going to buy a newspaper which he *remembered* reading in the future. He hadn't read it yet, but events of the future were producing effects in the past.

These effects from future causes were in the mind alone. Not a single material event was being altered by them. People would go on betting on the horses the way they had, ignor-

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ing their pre-memory that told them which horse actually would win. Some of them would go to the betting window or the bookie with the full intention of betting on the actual winner—to find their mouths saying the name of another horse.

And there would be a few who would actually bet on the winner, and perhaps think they had changed the future. Maybe some of them would actually have distinct pre-memory of betting on another horse than the one they did. Would it be false memory? Probably. Everyone has distinct memories of the past which, when checked against the memory of others present at the time, proves to have false elements in it.

How, then, to change things? The corned beef hash, for example. It wouldn't really have proven anything if he had gotten a hamburger steak, because it could then have been a false pre-memory.

Don found himself rising to his feet. He paid little attention, knowing that what he was going to do at any moment couldn't be changed. At least not yet. It wasn't fatalism. He couldn't close his eyes and walk across a street filled with speeding autos, because his eyes would remain open and his instinct for survival would be in operation as inevitably as his feet would carry him. And one part of his mind would be in operation as though there were no such thing as pre-memory.

That, perhaps, was the basic truth of the new state of affairs. The Don Smith of yesterday, oblivious of the future, was still there. Still oblivious of the future. He, the part of him aware of the future and trying to find some way to change it, was a new thing, born with the influx of pre-memory.

He stilled his thoughts and probed, and sure enough, down under the level of consciousness on which he was operating, he could sense another level of thinking in which he was wondering where the paper boy was who usually stood on the corner, and slightly irritated because of the prospect of having to hunt another to buy a paper from.

Actually, although he couldn't be seen yet, the paper boy was standing in a recessed doorway just at the corner. But one part of him *didn't know that!*

To that part of him nothing had changed. The future was a dark mystery.

Don paused on the corner, frowning, then "discovered" the newsboy and stepped into the doorway to buy the paper.

And suddenly, for the moment, he turned his thought away from pre-memory and was his old self, curious about the news and eager to sit down someplace and read the paper.

It didn't last. Boredom made him retreat from the lower level and return to speculation about the whole panorama of past and future. After all, he already knew what was in the paper!

DON DECIDED to relax and study his own mind. Study it in an attempt to discover ways in which he could affect it.

It wasn't really his, he soon discovered. It was completely unaware of him. Here and there was a vague disturbance that had been quickly forgotten. The elevator incident, for example. The Don Smith that didn't know the future was convinced he had had a hunch, and wished he had followed the hunch.

As the hours passed, the independence of what Don was already calling the two consciousness centers grew more and more uncanny. It wasn't

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like insanity, he decided. Or was it? If his pre-memory of the future hadn't been borne out by every new moment it would be insanity.

Night came. His normal consciousness center grew tired and went to bed at its usual time. In the morning when he awakened he realized that he had slept too. And the sleep had refreshed him and given him new insight into things.

While the normal part of his mind dealt with such things as dressing and eating breakfast he pursued a new train of thought that had come to him on waking.

There was such a thing as precognition. He'd read about it. There was some evidence that tended to support the contention that at times man is able to see the future. In most people it was a latent faculty if it existed at all. In others there were times when things to come could be seen with great accuracy.

Suppose this strange celestial body approaching the earth might be emitting some ray that awakened this precognitive faculty, rather than playing havoc with time itself.

Or perhaps the precognitive faculty were always there, fully developed and active, but normally he was unaware of it—just as right now his lower consciousness center was unaware of it! Then this mysterious force from the approaching asteroid merely did something to shift his ego-consciousness into the precognitive center!

It sounded elaborate, but it was really simple. It was like concentrating on visual sensations for a moment, and then being unable to be acutely aware of sounds afterwards. The consciousness did shift from one department of the mind to another. So there wasn't anything really unusual about it if it were assumed there was a precognitive center always in operation.

But now that brought up something else. Yesterday he had been sure he saw in everyone around him the same awareness of the future that was in him. Could he have been mistaken? It was easy to read something into a person's expression or actions that didn't exist. It was quite possible that he alone knew the future, knew that in thirteen days the world would be destroyed!

This morning the waitress seemed perfectly normal. There seemed no light of knowledge of the future lurking behind the smile in her eyes. But now he knew there was none in his. He was relaxed, observant. Maybe she was being the same. And the other people around him who talked and laughed as though they didn't know they had only thirteen more days to live.

He turned now to the biggest mystery confronting him, the mystery of why there was strictly one-way contact between himself and his former consciousness center, and how it could *carry on as though he were present and directing it when he was not.*

From the over-all point of view it was a product of necessity. That is, if events weren't to be changed.

What would happen if some event were changed? Would the change just happen, with no effect on anything else? Or would it start a series of cause and effect that would make everything be different? Would it be a spark that would explode into something that would change everything?

Don puzzled over these questions. Gradually the determination crystalized in him to change at least one thing before the world ended, and see what happened.

"Just one thing," he decided.

And from somewhere in the depths of his mind came the question, "How

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could you be sure you had changed it?"

False memory again. Already he had experienced it. Several times he could have sworn that things happened differently than his pre-memory had told him they would, only to reluctantly decide that his pre-memory had been confusing the event with another.

The problem became an obsession. Day after day it occupied his thoughts almost to the exclusion of everything else. The morning came that he awoke with the realization that there were only three more days before that strange body approaching the Earth struck.

And abruptly, like a pistol shot, the answer exploded into consciousness. His pre-memory extended right up to the terrible sound and searing heat of oblivion, three days away. If he could somehow destroy himself today, now, that would be something different than pre-memory pictured. So utterly different that there could be no possibility of laying it to false memory!

IT WAS an unsatisfactory answer in many ways, Don decided, but it was the only sure answer. He would know at the last instant that he had effected a real change in events, but he would never know what result it would produce. He would die with the knowledge that he had accomplished what he set out to do, and that would be worth the three days he would be shortening his life.

He studied ways to go about it. At rare moments he could vaguely influence the thoughts of his lower consciousness centers. Like the hunch about the elevator getting stuck. He had the advantage that he knew everything that was going to happen during the day. He could look ahead and make some plan.

It was nine o'clock in the morning. At about eleven-thirty he was going to be downtown. There was going to be a car run out of control. It was going to head directly toward him, then turn and ram into a light pole. He was going to see it coming, freeze, and be perfectly safe. There was going to be an instant when he almost started to run out into the street. Maybe, in that instant, he could precipitate things and actually try to run, and get hit by the car.

It might even be that he could prepare for that instant by trying to impress uneasiness, a hunch, on his lower consciousness level. He had no pre-memory of doing so, but it might work.

He relaxed his thoughts, identifying himself with the thoughts in his lower consciousness. Almost he could forget and *be* that other self. Days of practice had made that easier.

He caught a streetcar and rode toward the downtown section, concentrating on the sounds of people talking above the noise of the car, on the things he saw around him. His lower consciousness level was thinking about a book he had read recently. He pretended it was he who was doing the thinking, the seeing, the hearing. And into this he inserted a thought, "I am going to be killed today."

It made no impression. He hadn't expected it to all at once. Patiently he persisted, identifying himself with every thought on the lower level, then thinking, "I'm going to be killed today."

By the time he got off the streetcar he was aware of a certain nervousness. It definitely belonged to the lower consciousness level, but there was no way of knowing if it were something not pre-determined or not, since it was too vague to have been

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known ahead of time in pre-memory.

He persisted. At the same time he watched every thought in the lower consciousness center, trying to seize into it and influence it.

Without warning he made his first definite contact. It wasn't much. It was just a feeling in the lower center that "this is strange. I have an uncanny feeling that I've done this before!"

A surge of elation flooded through Don. Like a man playing solitaire and concentrating on every card, he watched every thought passing through the lower consciousness centers, trying to grasp and divert the train of awareness.

Slowly, by infinitesimal stages, he built up an emotion of uneasy anxiety there. Time was short. There was less than five minutes.

THE CORNER where the accident was to occur was just ahead. Was he going to die there? Pre-memory quite definitely said he was going to pause, see the car bear down toward him out of control, experience a moment of confusion, then see the car lurch aside and ram against a light pole. After that he was going to watch with the rest of the crowd until the ambulance took away the driver, then cross the street and keep going.

The thing he wanted to do was so simple. He wanted to make himself try to dodge that car. Then that final swerve would catch him, perhaps squeezing out his life against the light pole.

In the lower consciousness center the uneasiness was already growing, vague in form and casting about for something tangible to pin its cause to, in an attempt at rationalization.

"If only it's enough," he prayed.

He was at the corner now. The red light stopped him. He looked at the street scene, the buildings, the people, already nostalgic. But they too would be snuffed out in another three days.

The car was already in view, speeding toward the intersection. It was half a block away, a quarter. It started to swerve, then straightened.

In his lower consciousness he was staring fixedly at that car, wildly questioning why there should be such a presentiment about it.

It wasn't slowing down. The driver was staring at him with wide eyes full of horror. The car was swerving, heading directly toward him.

"Run!" Don screamed in his mind.

Suddenly a wave of dizziness swept over him. With it, someone seemed to rush past out into the street. At the same time he seemed to be running out into the street himself.

The world about him separated into double images widely spaced. Then, abruptly, there was only one of everything. The car rushing down on him was screeching to a stop scant inches away.

"Whyntcha watch whatcher doin'?" the driver shouted angrily.

"Sorry," Don said.

Feeling so weak he wanted to lie down right in the street, he turned around and went back to the curb.

The car started and drove on across the intersection. But Don, as he stood there, had a strange feeling that he had split off from himself, and that right where he stood was another Don Smith, and against the light pole a few feet away was a badly mangled car with the corpse of the driver in it.

He stilled his nervous thoughts and probed for the other Don Smith on the lower level of consciousness. He wasn't there.

Experimentally Don gave the mental command for his arm to rise. It obeyed.

He looked around him. Everything

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seemed the same as it had been. Nothing was changed so far as he could see. Was everything still the same? A dread thought assailed him—that he had failed.

"But my arm! I moved it of my own free will!" he exclaimed in his thoughts.

Something else made itself aware. He no longer had pre-memory. He searched his thoughts. *He had no faintest idea of what he would be doing even five seconds in the future.*

A STORE window across the street caught his eye. It was a men's suit display. It would have caught anyone's eye. The dummies were dressed in suits whose trousers came down to neat formfitting cuffs at the ankles, and whose sleeves did the same. The body of the coat and trousers was of one color, while the lapels and sleeve cuffs and trouser cuffs were of a matching color.

Don looked in the middle of the block at the sign to make sure of what he already knew, that this was Field's huge store. Then he shook his head slowly in wonder. Field's wasn't in the habit of featuring crackpot designs in men's clothes.

Unconsciously he glanced down at his own suit. It was identical in design with those in the window display! He stared at it for a moment, then swiftly searched his pockets for his billfold.

It was where he always kept it, in his left hip pocket, which was a comforting fact. But it was definitely not his. He opened it to look for identifications. What he saw both confused and relieved him. The name on the various cards was his own, Donald Smith, but the cards were different from any he had ever seen before.

There was a driver's license. On the top line was a printed, "Type:-" and after it, in stamped lettering, "Pass: cars & planes." There was another card which bore the heading, "Citizen's identification."

He looked in the money compartment. There were several bills in it of various size. At first glance they seemed ordinary currency, until he read the heading. It was, "Republic of America."

A cold numbness settled over him. "I'm mad," he thought. "I'm insane. I should have guessed it before, but—this simply can't be."

"Paper, mister?" a voice broke into his thoughts.

"Yes!" Don said. He reached into his side pocket and brought out a small handful of change. "Pick it out," he said to the news hawk.

The man picked out a nickel and handed him the paper. It was the *Journal,* with the same design of heading that it had always had. But the headlines could never have appeared in the *Journal* as he had always known it. MARS LINER LOST IN SPACE.

What had happened? Had he in some way been transported to the far future? He searched for the date on the paper and his mystification grew. The date was Sept. 7, 1957, the same as it had been that morning when everything had been normal.

A million questions were crowding into his thought. He had the same name here, the buildings seemed the same, even the newspaper had the same name.

A car pulled to a stop in front of him. Its horn gave two short toots. The girl behind the wheel leaned over and opened the door.

"Don!" she said. "Where in heaven's name have you been? Get in!"

He hesitated, then decided the only way to find out things was to be with someone who apparently knew him. He climbed in. The car shot forward even as he sat down and started to

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close the door.

"I've been looking all over for you," the girl said, "driving up one street and down another, trying to get to you before they did. Luckily I found you first or your life wouldn't be worth a plugged nickel."

"Why?" Don asked. "What have they got against me?"

From the expression on her face he decided he had said the wrong thing. She frowned and looked sideways at him, then looked forward again at the traffic as she wove in and out at breakneck speed.

Suddenly she caught her breath sharply, and risked another look at him. "What's my name?" she demanded. "Tell me. Quick!"

"I don't know," Don confessed. "I never saw you before."

"Oh lord," the girl said, braking to a stop. "So that's what happened. You're the *other*. And poor Don's stuck over there on a world that's going to crash day after tomorrow. There isn't time to explain to you or bother with you. You'll have to get out and get along as best you can."

"Wait a minute!" Don said. "I'm entitled to some explanations."

Abruptly there was a small gun in the girl's left hand.

"Get out," she said. "Get out!" And from the look in her eyes Don sensed she would pull the trigger if he didn't.

He opened the door and slid out. Immediately the car lurched ahead, motor racing as it picked up speed.

DON STARED after the receding car, anger slowly rising in him. He saw it come to a stop a block and a half away as the light changed to red. He glanced around hastily. A taxi was coming. He flagged it down.

"There's a car in the next block I want you to follow," he said. "It's that maroon sedan with the girl in it. I want to see where she goes."

"Your wife?" the driver asked, casually running the red light to catch up with the other car before it could get going.

"No," Don said. "It's a girl that knows me well enough to play me a dirty trick, but I never saw her before in my life. I want to find out who she is."

"That might be simple if she owns the car," the driver said.

The light was green now. The girl started up. The driver skillfully followed her. At the same time he picked up a hand microphone.

"Thirty-five reporting," he said into it. "Give me the name of the owner of license KQ43-826. Also the address." He darted a glance back at Don. "See how simple?"

The loudspeaker under the dashboard came to life after a moment. "Owner of license KQ43-826 is Thelma Grant, 12614 Northern Boulevard."

"There you are," the driver said. "Want to write it down?" He passed a tablet and pencil back to Don. "And keep scooted down or she'll see you. She's studying the cab, trying to decide if it's following her. And while you're at it, take a look at the blue sedan half a block behind us. It's been on our tail for several blocks."

Startled, Don looked back. There seemed to be four men in the blue sedan. It was difficult to make out their faces, but he felt quite sure he had never seen any of them before. And that made him wonder why he had hoped he might have. This was a different world, regardless of its similarities to his own. Whatever explanation lay behind his being here, whatever the cause of the similarities, it was a little absurd to expect to find anyone here that he knew.

The driver of the blue sedan was the only one of its occupants whose

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face could be seen clearly. Don studied it. It could have belonged to any type, from college professor to a gunman in a mob. And it might be both, Don reflected. Thelma Grant had said *they* would kill him, and it was mixed up with his own world in some way, indicating that there was science of some kind behind it.

"Recognize any of them?" the taxi driver asked.

"No," Don said. "They seem to be definitely following us though."

"Maybe we'd better forget the girl and shake them," the driver said. "You know her name and address now."

"Okay," Don said.

Ten minutes later the taxi driver was frowning uneasily. "That boy behind the wheel back there knows every trick," he said. "Tell me, do you think there might be shooting?"

"I don't think so," Don said, "but maybe you could slow down right after we turn a corner and let me out." He took a ten dollar bill out of his billfold.

It gave him an eerie feeling when the cab driver looked at the bill with its REPUBLIC OF AMERICA engraved across the top with eyes that lit up at the sight of real money. Don felt like a man passing Confederate money.

"I know the place to do it," the driver said, abandoning his pursuit of Thelma Grant and taking the corner with screeching tires. "It's four blocks from here. A beer parlor with a back entrance."

There were two more quick turns. The blue sedan was trying to catch up now.

"What'll you do?" Don asked.

"Me?" the driver said, grinning into the rearview mirror. "A couple blocks later I'll be at the curb with my flag up when they come around the corner. I won't know a thing about it." He twisted the wheel violently and braked to a stop. "Slam the door!"

Don was out and slamming the door, then jumping across the sidewalk. Just inside the door of the beer parlor he stopped and looked out. The blue sedan whizzed by, still swaying from the curve. He stepped out and watched it turn the next corner, then went inside and sat at the bar and ordered a bottle of beer. It was a brand he had had before, and its flavor was neither good nor bad, just as it had always been.

THE HOUSE on Northern Boulevard numbered 12614 was almost a palace. Don paid the cab driver and walked up the curving sidewalk, examining the landscaping and the exterior of the house with a realization that Thelma Grant belonged to a family that wasn't exactly poor.

For that matter, he thought, fingering the cloth of his suit, he didn't seem to be poor himself. Careful exploration of his clothes had revealed a secret pocket in which several thousand dollars in big bills was secreted.

He pressed the buzzer and heard melodious chimes on the other side of the heavy front door.

He glanced back toward the street. A blue sedan was pulling to the curb. Quickly Don dropped off the porch into the concealment of the bushes.

The four men got out of the sedan and came up the walk just as the door opened. Don risked a quick look above the edge of the porch. The man who stood in the doorway watching the four men approach looked like a servant.

"Is Miss Grant home?" one of the four asked as they reached the steps.

"I don't know, sir," the servant said. "Who is calling?"

"So she is home," the spokesman said. "We're coming in."

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Don watched almost openly as the four men leaped up the steps and reached the door before the servant could get it closed. All five disappeared inside. There was the sound of scuffling.

Don glanced back at the blue sedan. It was empty. He stepped out of the bushes and went around to the side of the house in search of a place to enter.

A high hedge hid his movements from neighbors. He tried the first window he came to after peeking in and finding the room empty. The window was unlocked. It slid up almost noiselessly. With a light leap he was over the edge of the sill and climbing into the room.

It seemed to be a little used study. He crossed it quickly and opened the door a crack. Voices exploded sharply.

"What'd you do with Smith?" one of them demanded.

"I tell you I haven't seen Don," Thelma's voice answered.

"Don't tell us that," the same voice snarled. "We saw you pick him up. In fact, we followed you knowing you'd lead us to him. After a few blocks you stopped and he got out, and before we could get to him he caught a cab and followed you." Thelma caught her breath audibly. "Then he must have seen us following him. He gave us the slip. We searched for him, then came over here. Since he isn't here we'll wait for him."

"He certainly won't show up here," Thelma's voice s o u n d e d. "You're wasting your time."

"March, go out and park the car around on another street," the spokesman ordered.

Don opened the door a little farther and saw the driver, March, go to the door. Crane held a gun on Thelma and the servant. The other two men had automatics in sight too.

"What'd Smith tell you when he was with you?" Crane asked.

"Nothing!" Thelma said defiantly.

Crane approached her abruptly and lashed the flat of his hand against her cheek.

Don had an impulse to throw the door open and leap through. The memory of how viciously she had ordered him out of her car stayed him.

"Talk," Crane said, "or I'll give you plenty."

"Why are you so c o n c e r n e d?" Thelma said. "Don gave me some crazy story about interdimensional fields. I don't know anything about it. It all sounded too absurd." She tossed her head defiantly. "Anyway, what could he possibly do, one man against—"

"He could do plenty—if he found a way to cross completely over," Crane said. "He could wreck everything. And if he doesn't show up here before long we're taking you into protective custody and question you until we find out what he told you or make sure he didn't tell you anything."

"You wouldn't dare arrest me!" Thelma said.

"You think not?" Crane said dryly.

And Don, listening on the other side of the study door straightened in surprise and mystification at this new development. These were police of some kind out there!

HE LOOKED back over everything, and realized he should have suspected those four men of being police long before, the way they followed him, the way they had driven up in front of Martha's and come to the front door, and pushed their way in. Even their manner was that of men with authority doing their job.

And Crane had said the Donald Smith of this world could "wreck

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everything" if he got all the way across. And he had, since he, the other Don Smith was here in this world.

He recalled how Thelma Grant had immediately caught on to the fact that he wasn't the one she thought he was. Her reactions weren't those of a bored and uncomprehending female, but the sharp awareness of one who knew all about it.

Don felt an impulse to open the door and give himself up to the police. He hesitated, turning over the points against it and in favor of it. The one monstrous fact that the world—his world—was doomed to be destroyed in two and a half days unless something beyond his own ability to understand were done, decided him.

He opened the door and stepped into the other room.

The three men saw him at once. Their entire attention was diverted to him. Thelma acted swiftly, jerking the gun from one of the men's hands.

"Put your hands up and drop your guns," she said, backstepping until she was well away from them all.

Crane and the other man with a gun let them fall to the floor. All three elevated their arms.

"Get over here, Don," she said.

"Wait a minute, Thelma," Don said. "I don't know what this is about, but my whole world seems to be threatened by something your Don Smith has done. I'm not going to let you get away with it."

"Shut up, you fool," she snarled.

"So he did it," Crane said. "You're not going to get away with this, Miss Grant. March will be coming in in a moment. What are you going to do with all of us?"

"Shoot you, maybe," she said, biting her lip. "There's too much at stake not to. You'd be able to find out all you need from Don to go after him and stop him."

Don had his hands in his pockets. His fingers encountered the dozen or more loose coins. He closed his fist around them and slowly brought them out. Thelma's eyes were warily going from one to another of the three police. He waited until she wasn't looking directly at him and quickly tossed the coins at her.

It was completely unexpected. While she was instinctively ducking and trying to figure out what was striking her he leaped at her, seizing the wrist of the hand that held the gun. He jerked it painfully. The gun came free and fell with a thud.

"Oh, you fool!" Thelma said, half crying.

Crane stepped in between Don and Thelma and put handcuffs on her.

"All right, Smith," he said. "You did a nice job. I'll have to remember that trick for future use. Come with me down to Central Coordination. We've got to work fast."

He started for the door. Don was beside him.

"Don!" Thelma cried out. "Don't tell—"

Her voice was cut off by a slap from one of the men holding her. Don looked back at her expressionlessly and went through the door with Crane.

"We're going to have to hurry," Crane said as they went down the walk. "I'm going to take you to government scientists and I want you to tell them everything you know. You won't know too much, but you'll probably know what they want, which will be exactly how you got *across*."

They trotted down to the nearest corner, went over a block, and found the blue sedan. The driver, March, had evidently gone around the block the other way since he wasn't there and they hadn't met him.

Crane slid behind the wheel and turned the key. The car was moving while Don sat down.

"I'm willing to cooperate," Don

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said. "But while we're going down could you tell me what this is about? This world looks just like my own in a lot of ways, but this Republic of America, and spaceships being lost in space... And how could two worlds be so much alike that they even have the same brands of beer?"

Crane chuckled and glanced sideways at Don as he increased his speed and threw on the siren.

"It's because they're so close together in hyperspace that they shape each other," he said.

"I'd guessed that much," Don said slowly. "Another thing, what would the Don Smith of this world have to gain by destroying my world?"

Crane lifted his eyebrows and nearly ran into a stopped car before he recovered. He remained silent for a long minute, then:

"He's a madman," he said. "That's it. You know what insanity is in your world? He's insane. He found a way to do this thing, and being insane he's determined to do it. That's why we've got to learn from you how to reach him before day after tomorrow."

DON WAS placed in a room by himself for a few minutes. Then Crane came back. With him were three men whom he introduced as the greatest scientists in the Republic of America.

"Maybe you scientists can explain what this field business is," Don said. "Crane said it was two worlds close together in hyperspace."

"That explains it adequately enough," the one who had been introduced as Dr. Lamont said. "However, there will be plenty of time later to educate you into the study of hyperaction. Right now we would like very much to hear everything you know of your personal experience leading up to your transfer to this body you are in."

"It all began," Don said, "when I woke up in the morning with memories of the coming three weeks. At first I didn't know what it was. Before an hour had passed I realized it was pre-memory, but even then I couldn't believe it would turn out to be true all down the line. I didn't want to believe that, because my memory of the future ended with the destruction of the world by some giant asteroid hitting us."

"Let's keep things clear," Dr. Lamont said. "You awakened from normal sleep with memory of the *coming* three weeks, and very shortly events tended to prove it was correct pre-knowledge. How accurate was it?"

"There were no exceptions," Don said.

"But didn't you try to change things?"

"Of course. But then I found that I had no control over my actions. I first discovered that when I tried to order a food different from what my pre-memory dictated. Then I discovered that there was a consciousness level independent of me which was going on in every detail as I suppose it would have if this change hadn't taken place in me. It knew nothing of the future, and didn't know I was trying to influence it."

"And did you search your mind to see if you could detect any other consciousness centers?" Dr. Lamont asked.

"I may have," Don said. "I don't remember. I concentrated on trying by various means to affect the thoughts of my lower level of thought. And slowly I became able to influence it emotionally so that it would be vaguely disturbed."

The scientists looked at one another and nodded.

"Then," Don continued, "I studied what was going to happen in the near

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future and picked out an event where I would possibly be able to change things by upsetting the emotional state beforehand. I found the ideal event for it."

"But why—I mean what was the purpose you had in mind?" Dr. Lamont asked.

"By now," Don said, "I was convinced the whole business was caused by some sort of field from this body that was going to destroy the Earth. It seemed to have trapped me, and maybe everyone else on earth, into a groove where our future was unchangeable. Even if I thought I changed something I discovered on careful thought that my pre-memory might have slipped up. So I came to the conclusion that the only sure way to change anything was to die before the world ended. Since I had a distinct memory of being alive when it ended, I could die knowing I had broken the chains."

"And this ideal event you spoke of?"

"A car out of control," Don said. "My pre-memory of it was that I would stand still, confused, and at the last moment the car would veer away and hit a light pole. If I could make myself try to run to escape it would hit me."

"And did it?" Dr. Lamont asked quickly.

"I don't know," Don said slowly. "There was an instant when I was exerting every ounce of strength to make myself run. Then I had a confused dual picture of standing on the curb watching myself run, feeling myself run into the street, and seeing everything like it was a double image. Then I was in this world, and the car wasn't out of control, but slamming on its brakes, and the driver was bawling me out for stepping in front of him."

"So you have no way of knowing if your own body remained on the curb or dashed into the street to be killed by the car?" Dr. Lamont said thoughtfully.

"God! I never thought of that before!" Don said. "That must be what happened. I was killed!"

"I don't think so," Dr. Lamont said. "In fact, I'm quite sure you weren't. There is the fact that you had a fleeting view of yourself dashing into the street, which means that for an instant you were seeing into this world from your own, and in that world you were doing exactly what pre-memory dictated. There is the further fact that the personality of the rightful owner of your present body is missing. It could only have been accomplished by—"

"I think we'd better retire and study what Mr. Smith has told us," the one called Dr. Davis interrupted. "We're going to have to work fast if we are to succeed, you know."

"You're right," Dr. Lamont said. "Crane, see that Mr. Smith is placed in comfortable quarters where we can consult him at a moment's notice. You understand the necessity of that, Mr. Smith? In your brain and mind are the essential clues to this grave problem. We may not have reached them yet. We may need you again, so you must stay here."

"I understand, of course," Don said.

THE ROOM he was placed in was on a high floor. It was comfortable to the point of luxury. Crane apologized for locking the door ahead of time, then left. And there were bars on the window.

Don tried the door to make sure it had been actually locked, went to the window and opened it. It seemed to him they were going a bit too far in

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making him an actual prisoner, but he could see their point of view. They needed him if they were going to save his world.

The question of how were they going to do it surged up into consciousness. Somewhere in the back of his thoughts when he had been trying to alter the future was the feeling that in that direction lay the key to saving the world, as though one single change in events over what they would normally and inevitably be would upset the whole course of destiny and in some mysterious way prevent a giant ball hurtling toward the earth from striking it.

How could an insignificant event produce such a gigantic change? And how had the other Don Smith managed to produce the impending catastrophe in the first place?

Don shook his head in an attempt to shake off the feeling of confusion that was growing again. The trouble, of course, was that he knew too little about the theories behind what he had experienced and seen. He was like someone trying to understand the workings of an electric motor without knowing anything about electricity or magnetism.

The present, he reflected, had been completely shaped by the past, and in turn completely determined all the future. It was like a geometry rising from a set of postulates. Change one postulate and an entire new geometry results. It might be like that. Change one fact of the present, and an entire new future immediately results.

What had happened when he suddenly found himself in this world? Here he had full control of his present body, and no idea of what would happen in the future. Was the other Don Smith in his body on the other earth, and was he in full control of it? Or was he right now trying in some way to force it to do something different that would change things?

But that couldn't be, because the other Don Smith wanted to make sure the earth was destroyed. It followed that he had taken over to prevent him from changing things.

That was it, of course. At the very moment when he had been about to succeed the other Don Smith had displaced him to stop him. And at the last minute, no doubt, he would return to his own body and force Don back into his. Then his own world would be destroyed, leaving only this one, in which, somewhere along the line, the American continent had developed one government instead of splitting into Canada and the United States.

Here they had probably done so. And achieved space travel too.

A MOVEMENT in a window of the building directly across the street attracted his attention. His eyes widened. It was Thelma, and some sort of gun was in her hands.

He threw himself to one side just as she fired. Something flashed through the bars of his window and struck against the wall on the other side of the room, then fell to the floor.

Keeping out of the line of fire he reached the long cylinder and picked it up. It was lightweight, with a rounded nose and small vanes spiralling around it to make it spin and keep a straight course.

He examined it curiously. It hardly seemed designed to kill. It hadn't struck the wall with enough force to mar the paint!

Suddenly he discovered that both ends had screw caps. He unscrewed one end. Inside was a rolled up piece of paper. He unrolled it. It was a hastily written note.

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"Don," it read, "you've got everything wrong. This will explain everything, so please read it. Dr. Lamont and the others are not what you think. They are the ones who are planning the destruction of your world. They are convinced that your world serves to retard progress on ours, and that the only way we can achieve our destiny is to destroy yours and free ours from its influence. They are the ones who have guided that asteroid so that it will collide with your Earth.

"Don is trying to produce some change in your world. If he succeeds, it will provide the push that will send your world an infinitesimal distance into the fourth dimension and enable it to escape the collision.

"If you help the scientists stop Don it will mean your world will be destroyed. Please believe me. And please believe that my reason for being so abrupt with you was a desire to keep you out of the way so the government wouldn't learn what you—or rather Don—had done."

There was her name and a postscript saying, "Please destroy this and say nothing to them."

Deliberately Don stepped in front of the window. He tore the note into small bits and threw them through the bars. There was no sign of Thelma at the other window.

WAS THELMA telling the truth? That question pressed down on Don with oppressive force. If she were right, then what he had already told the government scientists might have sealed the earth's fate.

But then this government of the Republic of America was lying to him to get him to cooperate so they could reach Donald Smith and stop him from saving it.

On the other hand, if Thelma were working with Donald Smith to destroy the Earth, it was she who was using those tactics.

"And damn it," Don muttered, "there's a dozen things to point to either of them lying—or telling the truth."

What, exactly, had Donald Smith done? Slide his ego into a separate compartment while remaining completely separate from it, then boot him over and take his place? It must have been something like that. Since they had both been on the same corner it was probable that physical presence in the same space was necessary.

Don tried to remember the little he knew of theories of hyperspace. Maybe when the two brains were in the same coordinates of three dimensional space and separated by a very narrow space in the fourth dimension they had a sort of condenser action on each other, and the electrical charges that were the mind could be transferred over in some way.

Maybe that was what the government scientists wanted to find out, in which case he had already told them enough to ensure the doom awaiting the earth. That was the trouble. Not knowing anything about the basic theory he had no way of evaluating anything he had said.

Was the other Don Smith still in contact with his own body? Don stilled his thoughts and tried to sense hidden thoughts, with no success.

Memory of those days in his own brain when he had been trying to change the course of events returned. Had it been he who had tried to change them—or the other Donald Smith? The more he thought about it the more certain he was that it must have been the other influencing his mind.

But how? And why couldn't the scientists like Dr. Lamont do the same thing?

The wall of ignorance that hemmed

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him in stifled speculation. Whichever way he turned might be the wrong way.

His thoughts turned to the general picture, of two worlds influencing each other by their proximity in hyperspace. So closely molded together that there was a man in each world named Donald Smith whose minds were able by some mysterious mechanism to change bodies. So closely molded that the more advanced of the two worlds felt the other was keeping it back by its very presence. That made sense. More sense than Crane's explanation of Donald Smith being a madman intent on senselessly destroying a whole world with its billions of people just to use some mad discovery. Especially since this world had space travel and could very well manipulate a giant globe and direct it toward a target.

Suddenly Don was certain Crane and Dr. Lamont had lied. He had to escape or they would use him again.

He went to the window and looked across. Thelma was at the other window once more. He waved at her and nodded vigorously to let her know he agreed with her. Her wave indicated she understood.

How was he going to escape? He examined the bars at the window. They were imbedded solidly. To saw them loose, assuming Thelma could shoot a saw blade across to him, would take hours. And something mad, like swinging across from one building to the other dozens of floors above the street probably wouldn't work. He'd be seen, and the other building surrounded before he and Thelma could escape.

He turned his attention to the locked door, and was startled by the scraping sound of a key going into the lock. He stepped back instinctively.

The door opened and Dr. Lamont stepped in.

"I wanted the answer to one more question right now, Mr. Smith," he said pleasantly. "When you transferred to this world were you apparently in the same place as you were in the other?" He smiled. "From what you said we gathered you were, but we must make absolutely sure. Could you have been inches away, standing on that corner? Or exactly together so that your brains coincided in space?"

The door was still open. The key in the lock was one of several on a key ring.

DON'S FIST shot out. Dr. Lamont sensed it coming and moved enough so that the blow missed him. Then he was trying to back out the door.

Don grasped the scientist's coat and pulled him into the room.

"Help!" Lamont shouted.

Don shoved him off balance and leaped to the door and through it into the hall. He slammed the door and twisted the key, and pulled it loose.

People were sticking their heads out of doorways looking for the source of the shout for help. A man leaped into the hall a hundred feet away and ran toward him, trying to bring something out from under his coat.

Don dived for a door marked "stairway," and in another moment was descending in giant leaps. Behind him footsteps pounded. A shot exploded with deafening sound and struck the wall beside him.

At each landing there was a hundred and eighty degree turn and more steps. The number on the next door was fifty-four.

The steps above stopped. Don guessed his pursuer had decided to catch an elevator and beat him down to the street level. His only hope, he realized, was to do the same. At fifty-

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three he went into the hall and hurried to the elevator bank.

"Oh, there you are, Mr. Smith," a voice sounded behind Don.

He whirled. It was the scientist called Dr. Davis. He was smiling calmly with no evidence of knowing what had happened.

"I suppose Dr. Lamont told you to come down to our laboratory. This is the entrance. Come in, please."

Don glanced toward the elevators and quickly decided this was his best bet.

"That's right," he said. "I was just going up to get the room number again. I'd forgotten it." He went past the scientist boldly and entered the room.

Davis, small and mild mannered and smiling happily, closed the door and included the instrument panels along the walls with a wave of his hand.

"This is the control center," he said. "The machinery it controls is a long ways from here, of course, but here is the brains."

Don walked around, inspecting things. There were video screens upon which complicated curves were changing constantly, meters with recording needles tracing out curves on slowly moving graph paper, red and green lights side by side, flickering on and off alternately.

"The lights record measured paragrav potential at key points on the planet," Davis said, seemingly happy to have someone to talk to. "Paragravity is the hyper-element of the normal gravity field with vector direction in the fourth dimension, and is of course the force holding your world and mine loosely together. The needles leaving their trace line on the graph paper translate paragrav potential into millionths of a centimeter distance between the hyperplanes. The video screens are portraying the details of certain standard individual contacts between the worlds. If and when your world is annihilated the entire control panel will become instantly blank."

"Can this panel do anything besides record?" Don asked innocently.

"Oh yes," Davis said proudly. "That panel over there is for exerting thrust between the two worlds. Hyperdimensionally, of course. The big difficulty to that is that the thrust mechanism could never be made strong enough to push more than a few thousandths of a centimeter. In order for the two worlds to become free of each other it would be necessary to shove each completely out of its own universe across countless others. Each would find itself in empty space light-years from the nearest sun."

"How much distance out of a hyperplane must one of the worlds be to be actually out of it?" Don asked. "I mean so that matter in its former hyperplane couldn't touch it."

"A lot of factors enter in, of course," Dr. Davis said, "but in general less than a thousandth of an inch. I wonder what's keeping Dr. Lamont? Did he say anything about being delayed?" Davis blinked his eyes owlishly at Don.

"He didn't say," Don said carelessly.

"That's strange," Dr. Davis said, edging toward a desk. "Come to think of it, he was only supposed to ask you a question, and then return."

Don leaped toward the scientist. But Davis was too quick. His hand darted into a drawer and came out with a gun.

"Stop or I'll shoot," he said....

"SO YOU tumbled," Crane said dryly.

"Your story didn't hold together," Don said, keeping his hands high and looking around at the scientists and

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plainclothes officers now in the control room.

"Evidently you're as smart as the real Don Smith," Crane said. "You could have played it smarter by playing along with us and giving us false information. As it is we have almost enough to go on."

Don licked his lips nervously. "I'm still betting on my counterpart," he said. "He has something you don't know about yet. I'm sure of that or you would use it."

"What does he have?" Dr. Lamont asked.

"It won't do any harm to tell you," Don said slowly, "because you don't have time to do anything about it. Remember my saying I woke up with a knowledge of the future? What Dr. Davis has told me about the hypergrav field has made me certain it has nothing to do with what Donald Smith is doing. He's going to alter the present and make my planet take another time-line in which destruction doesn't take place."

"I don't believe you understand as much about it as we believed," Dr. Lamont said. "He reached you through the bridge of the extra-temporal organ of your brain. We knew that. I think, since our cards are on the table now, that I can complete what I was going to say when Dr. Davis interrupted me before." He looked at Dr. Davis who nodded. "It could only have been accomplished by his going forward to the time when your world is destroyed and bridging the gap at that instant, and then going back in time to the moment when you first became aware of the future. In other words," he smirked, "at the instant immediately preceding your death!"

"Wait a minute," Don protested. "You're getting beyond my depth again. You mean time travel?"

"In a sense, yes," Dr. Lamont said. "In another sense, no. Consider the material universe as being a five dimensional continuum, and the mind as being a wave in that medium travelling at a constant speed in one direction in the fifth dimension. The channel is already there. Death is where the channel of your consciousness finds a break or termination. It reaches it, and is immediately a free energy pattern. Where it goes from there no one knows. But your counterpart can no more change the course and termination of that channel than you could change the course of the Mississippi by throwing a pebble in it at St. Louis."

"You're wrong," Don said. He lowered his hands without thinking, and paced the floor. "Don Smith's seen something you haven't, I'm sure. And —that's it! Of course!" He looked up at the faces of those watching him and burst into a laugh. "I see it all now," he said. "You're doomed to failure. No matter what you do you won't succeed in destroying the Earth."

"Not even if you told us what it is?" Crane asked.

"I don't know," Don said, frowning. "Since there may be a chance I'm not going to tell you."

"Won't you even give us a clue?" Dr. Davis asked.

Don looked at the mild-mannered little scientist and was suddenly filled with revulsion for these men who calmly plotted the destruction of one world to advance their own.

"Sure I'll give you a clue," he said, his lip curling. "I'll throw your own words right back in your face. What Donald Smith set out to do he has already done, and you can no more change it than you could alter the roadbed of the Mississippi by tossing in a pebble at St. Louis."

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THE SCIENTISTS looked at one another, then by common agreement turned to Crane.

"I think we can get him to talk," Crane said tonelessly.

"There isn't much time," Dr. Lamont said worriedly. He turned impulsively to Don. "Mr. Smith, if you cooperate with us now I feel sure we can promise you enough millions of dollars to live any kind of life you choose."

"That would be wonderful," Don said. He turned to Crane. "Remember when you said Don Smith was a madman? I think all of you are insane. Deliberately plotting the murder of two billion people for some mythical idea that their presence so near you is retarding your world."

"My, my," Dr. Davis murmured. "Your ignorance is really too much. Don't you know that your world isn't as real as all that? Its substance is real enough, but you, and everyone on your world, are subsidiary effects of this world. You don't really live in the true sense of the word. Your division of America into the United States and Canada. Here the two were united from the beginning, and as a consequence there was no world war any of the times you had one. You made the atom bomb. We developed space travel instead. You aren't alive. You are individual dragnets holding down the speed of our minds. It isn't murder."

"You really are mad," Don said.

"This is very embarrassing," Dr. Lamont murmured uncomfortably.

Don stared in open mouthed wonder.

"Do you actually believe what you've said?" he demanded.

"Believe it?" Dr. Davis said. "It's far more than that. Did you ever wonder why there was a Don Smith in this world who is a counterpart of you? Believe me, Smith, there is more proof to back it up than—than there is that the atmosphere consists of molecules and atoms!"

"Give me some proof," Don said.

"On the earth you came from are people who believe when they die they go to a better world," Dr. Davis said. "This is it."

"Heaven?" Don said. "You're convincing me more and more you're insane."

"The truth at the core of the matter," Dr. Davis went on, "is that when the counterpart on your world dies the one here is freed of the mental drag and immediately becomes many more times as intelligent."

"What about when one dies here before his counterpart on our side?" Don asked.

Davis shrugged. "We're unable to check on those cases, naturally, because we can't get across."

"We've tried," Dr. Lamont said. "Where we have succeeded it has given rise to belief on your side of supernatural phenomena."

"Wonderful," Don mocked. He looked about him, at the men and at the instrument panels against the walls. "So this is Heaven!" he murmured.

"No," Davis said. "It's the source that gives rise to the phenomena that produce a belief in your world in the supernatural. Once your world has been annihilated, our average intelligence—freed of the drag from your hyperplane—will rise immeasurably."

"It's too bad you can't bridge the gap," Don said. "There's a lot of people on our side who'd believe you. But I don't."

Crane spoke up. "We're wasting time," he said. "I think I'd better start to work on him."

The scientists blinked at Don uncomfortably and turned away.

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"THE DRUG doesn't work," Crane's exasperated voice sounded dimly and from far away.

A strange voice answered. "It's because the mental matrix isn't native to the brain. The drug merely drives it out of reach."

"Well give him an antidote so we can try some direct methods," Crane ordered.

"It's too bad," the strange voice said. "It will take several hours for him to recover even with the antidote to speed things up."

Don grinned and went to sleep. It seemed only a minute later that he awoke to the bewildering sensation of his face being slapped roughly. His entire body tingled, but he was fully awake and with no signs of being drugged.

"All right," Crane snarled down at him. "Tell us what makes you think Donald Smith has succeeded."

"Give me time to collect my thoughts," Don protested. "Try waking out of a deep sleep yourself sometime." He blinked up at Crane for a minute. "How much longer is there?"

"Less than twenty-four hours," Crane said.

A voice from somewhere in Don's mind whispered, "Stall them off. They could stop me if they knew."

A wave of relief flooded through Don. He wasn't *alone!*

"Tell me," Crane said. "I'd hate to have to really start in on you."

Suddenly Don's eyes widened. An inspiration had struck him. He acted on it at once.

"I've been thinking," he said. "I'm convinced that Davis and Lamont are right. This is Heaven." He smiled knowingly. "You want me to tell you how I got here?"

Crane frowned suspiciously, then nodded.

"I died," Don said in a hoarse whisper. He put an expression of blank innocence on his face. "How else could I get here in Heaven? Do you know of any other way? How did you get here, Crane?"

The creases between Crane's deep-set blue eyes grew more pronounced.

"You aren't dead," he said, "and I was born here. Stop this nonsense and tell me what makes you think he's succeeded."

"But I don't want him to succeed," Don said. "Prophecy says the world will end and everybody will go to Heaven. I'm here, and I want everyone else to come here. You don't look like an angel, Crane, but then I don't feel like one myself. But this must be Heaven because I'm dead."

Crane slapped the side of Don's head violently. "Talk!" he grated.

"Or is this Hell?" Don said. "Am I being punished for something I did on Earth? I must deserve it then. Are you a devil, Crane?"

"Talk!" Crane shouted, striking the other side of Don's head.

"You must be a devil," Don went on in a monotone, "because an angel would be kind. I wish I had led a better life when I was alive—"

"Talk!" Crane screamed. "Come on! Spill—"

Don blinked his eyes and realized he had been unconscious. How long? Crane was across the room with his back turned. A stranger who was probably a doctor was wiping Don's face with a cool damp cloth. The man saw that Don's eyes were open and turned to tell Crane.

"Are you an angel?" Don said. "You must be, because you are kind to me. Am I in Heaven now. What's Crane doing here then? I thought he was a devil."

Don kept on talking in a low monotone.

"I think he's out of his head," the

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stranger said to Crane.

"Nonsense," Crane snorted. "It's just an act to stall us."

"Look at his eyes," the stranger said. "They're bloodshot."

"That's because I hit him," Crane said.

"He's been punishing me for the sins I committed on Earth," Don said. "I want to confess my sins so I can go to Heaven now that I'm dead. I can't remember all of them, but when I was five years old I set fire to a neighbor's woodshed so I could watch the fire trucks come..."

"ONE HOUR!" Crane's desperate voice broke into Don's waking mind. He had been unconscious again, he realized. How many times? At least a dozen.

He opened one eye a mere slit. Davis and Lamont were in sight, chewing their lips nervously.

"Maybe he has really gone insane," Lamont said. "After all, perhaps what intelligence they have on the lower level is merely a reflection of ours—"

"Nuts," Crane said. "You have everything ready for instant use as soon as we find what Donald Smith did?"

"Yes," Lamont said.

Don closed his eyes and lay still. It lasted five minutes.

"He's conscious!" Davis's voice sounded accusingly. "His eyes are moving under the lids!"

"Yes, I'm conscious," Don said, opening his eyes. "Why don't you kill me? I'll tell you why. It's because this is Heaven or Hell, and here I can't die. I'm immortal."

"The reason we don't kill you is because there would be Hell to pay," Crane said. "We're breaking the law by holding you this long without letting you get a lawyer."

"Lawyer?" Don echoed, grinning crookedly. "Then this must be hell."

"Talk!" Crane shouted, raising his hand.

"Wait!" Lamont said. He came over and stood above Don. "Do you really believe you are dead?" he asked.

"Of course!" Don said in innocent surprise. "Didn't you tell me yourself that—"

"He's insane," Lamont said, turning away.

"He's not," Crane insisted. "That's just a line he's taking to keep from talking. I might do that myself if I were in his spot. But he's only human. He'll talk."

"Of course I'll talk," Don said. "Now that I'm dead and know that everything they told me on Earth was right I'll say anything. What do you want me to say?"

Crane screwed his face up into a pleasant smile. "Look, Don," he said, "all we want you to tell us is what Donald Smith did that is going to keep the world you came from from being destroyed. Will you tell us?"

"Is it going to be destroyed?" Don said.

"Yes," Crane said, his lips still puckered into a smile.

"That's wonderful!" Don said. "Then all my friends can be with me. Or—" He put on a worried frown. "—will they go to Heaven instead of here?"

"You're doing fine," a voice whispered somewhere in his mind. *"Just a few more minutes. And when it's done they won't be able to hold my body. And you'll be back in yours."*

An image of Thelma flashed into Don's mind, and with it a feeling of regret. Was the thought his own? Or had the other Don brought it up to get a glimpse of her? It didn't matter, Don decided. His counterpart had good taste.

"If I ever meet a girl like her on Earth..." he thought.

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"See what I told you?" Crane said exasperatedly. "That's an act. God, the guts of the man to joke after all he's gone through."

"Isn't there some way you can make him talk?" Davis said. "Burning slivers under his fingernails or something?"

"That wouldn't be more painful than headslaps repeated for hours," Crane said, "and it would leave scars for proof."

He slapped Don again.

"There's only ten minutes!" Davis pleaded. "All our plans brought to nothing..."

"Ten minutes?" Don said.

"Less than that," the other Don's thought whispered. *"You can tell them now."*

CRANE raised his hand again, preparing to strike.

"Wait!" Don said. "It's too late to do any good now, so I'll tell you."

"Well?" Crane said, holding his hand ready to bring down against Don's face.

"I had the clue all along," Don said. "It's such a simple thing, but I didn't know what it meant until I was told to consider both worlds and their future as a five dimensional continuum. Then I saw it. I knew the world I live on wasn't destroyed. How could I know that if it were? What I mean is, I had a pre-memory of it being destroyed, and if it actually were I could have had no such pre-memory! I would have had only a pre-memory of things up to a certain point, and then nothing. No knowledge of what had happened. But then Davis told me how both worlds could be moved apart a little ways in the fourth dimension. I gathered that would take plenty of machines and power. But—what if the entire wavefront of world consciousness could be jumped forward past the break before it took place? If events are a wave front it would mean that so far as the world is concerned one instant that asteroid would be about to hit the earth, and the next it would be going away on the other side! That would provide the break that Donald Smith crossed over through, and also the means of saving the Earth. And if I have it guessed right, it was his act of crossing over that provided the change that jumped the time front. Right this instant!"

The scene before his eyes swayed dizzily and drifted away into infinity. A vague thought entered his mind that Crane had hit him again. He blinked his eyes.

"HERE IS your hamburger steak, sir," a melodious voice broke into his confused thoughts.

Don blinked his eyes and looked up at the girl holding the plate. He blinked them again. It was Thelma!

"Oh, hello, Thelma," he said.

"You were asleep," she accused. "And how did you know my name?"

"Hamburger steak?" Don hedged. "I thought I ordered corned beef hash."

"We're out of the corned beef," the girl said, setting the plate down. She smiled at him and added, "But you didn't tell me how you knew my name?"

Don looked past her at the busy restaurant scene. He was on his own Earth again. Inside he had a comfortable feeling that the crisis had passed. The world was safe. At least for a long time. He turned his attention back to the waitress.

"How did I know your name?" he echoed. "It's a long story. What time do you get through work?"

"In half an hour," she said. Then she gasped. "Oh my goodness! It's only ten minutes until quitting time.

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What could have happened to that twenty minutes? I'd swear that I looked at my watch just a moment ago and it was seven-thirty." She smiled down at Don. "Stay right here and I'll have a cup of coffee with you after quitting time."

She turned and hurried away.

Don watched the rhythm of her body as she sped toward the back of the restaurant, while from some far reach of his mind came a whispering voice, *"That should reward you for what you went through."*

Don smiled in contentment, but already he was beginning to be quite sure it had been just a dream...

And if it weren't, he mused dreamily, then Thelma was quite inevitable...

THE END

NOT LONG ago, in Scotland, a huge sea serpent was allegedly sighted by two men out for a peaceful day's fishing. They claimed that the monster appeared to have a large black head with a considerable length of neck, and that it moved at a speed of about 12 knots. They said they watched the beast for about 15 minutes, and that it was similar to the prehistoric monsters described in anthropology books.

Since 1933, reports of sighting such a beast have been received from time to time in the same community where this sea animal was now reported placidly swimming.

Perhaps he's only a figment of the imagination. But then again, isn't it possible such an animal actually does exist today? Maybe he's a throwback to the monsters of olden days.

Or maybe some of the monsters that roamed our world in prehistoric times were preserved in the bowels of the earth, in a state of frozen suspension. Maybe caught in an ice avalanche, with thousands of feet of snow and ice piled on top. Now, with the death-dealing bombings with which mankind protects itself, the innermost depths of the earth may have been jolted, and these frozen bodies loosened. They arise to the surface where the ice enclosing them melts. Hardly true—but certainly a fascinating theory upon which to speculate.

CRETE TO PARIS IN 3400 YEARS

ONE OF the most fantastic facts that cropped up in the unearthing of the Minoan palace, was its modernity. It was almost impossible to believe that this was a civilization that did not exist after about 1400 B.C.

Its modern sanitary improvements, for example, were almost beyond belief. The ingenuity with which they had built drains and ventilators and lavatories, light shafts, sinks, refuse pits, amazed the excavators. Why, even today some of our "modern" dwellings don't have all these comforts. In one of the queen's private bathrooms, even a terra-cotta bathtub had been provided.

This ancient palace was about as big as Buckingham Palace. It was many stories high, all connected by very elaborate and elegant staircases. Hallways and stairway landings and porticoes were decorated with beautiful artwork painted on plaster and stucco.

And the women—! From paintings found on the palace walls, they would run our girls pretty close competition. They seem to have a sparkle in their eyes as they gaze out at a world almost 3400 years removed from them; they seem to promise that life has always been the same and always will be, and that living is really much fun. Amazingly enough, they are dressed for the most part in flounced robes and jackets with puffed sleeves, curls across their foreheads, sometimes wearing gloves, sometimes carrying them. They all seem to be perked up in animated conversation. It is difficult to believe that they are not from recent times.

The men, though—that's another matter. They do look as though they lived in prehistoric Greece—wearing patterned loincloths, long boots, bodies bare from the waist up, long hair elegantly done up on top of the head.

It's interesting to speculate on what a civilization 3400 years from now will think of us!

Jonathon Peterson

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READER'S PAGE

HE LAUGHED WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES...

Dear Editor:

I enjoyed "Everybody Loves Irving Bommer" in your August issue greatly. But what an ending the thing had! Not only is the idea of somebody getting squashed in the rug rather trite (at least to me), but it's downright sad. Let's not have sad endings to hilarious stories, please.

Let your slaving, slobbering gang of authors tack them on to space opry or mad scientists yarns all they want to, even on those love stories which seem to creep into your mag (no, I don't mind them); but on humor, no! No!

Sad endings are nice *in their place.*

Thanks for the very long letter column. Now Paul Ganley's conscience won't hurt him so much when you publish one of those opera (well, that's what *Webster's Twentieth Century Dictionary* says the plural of "opus" is) he used to write.

Many gratitude for the feature on Sturgeon. Please keep the section.

Despite the sad ending, "Everybody Loves Irving Bommer" was the best story in the mag this time. "Very Cold for Conquest" (the worst Costello story I've read) and "With This Ring" tie for second, and the others are unmentionable.

"Excalibur and the Atom" read almost like what it almost was: a detective story. I know Editor Browne writes detective stories, but I should think (and do) that this would make him realize the "old hat" type of thing in that field when he sees it. Can't we for once (just once to show me it's possible) have a detective who doesn't talk and act like a detective? I'm getting tired of the same old character in every detective-stf story I read, and I don't read over three of them a year. If this type character is prevalent in the detective mags, I shall steer even further away from them than I have in the past.

In fact, I'll form the GTDMOTSSWT-STFM club. You know, the "Get the Detective Mags Off the Same Shelf with the STF Mags" club.

In case someone doesn't know what I mean when I speak of the trite way these characters talk and act, there's an example on page 18 of "Excalibur and The Atom" where Guinn tells Garry, who lies on the ground with a bullet hole through his head, "Don't go away."

My friends told me that AS and FA were more juvenile than the other stf mags, but I haven't believed it up till now.

Thanks for the Finlay illustrations. They're superb! Which reminds me I disagree with Mr. Drisbrow anent Finlay and the nude girls on the cover. I say keep the former, and dispose of the latter.

SA. Tom Covington, USN
"T" Division, Submarine Admin.
Mare Island, California

We once ran a story where the private detective didn't do any of the things to which you object in "Excalibur and the Atom". The response we got from our readers was overwhelming. They refused to believe in him.

Actually, the private eye of real life is nothing at all like he is depicted in fiction. But the fictional detective is so much more colorful that the readers demand him.

As a matter of fact—the real life private dick now tries to emulate his fictional counterpart. ..... Ed.

FAN FOR LIFE

Dear Ed:

After reading Ted Sturgeon's wonderful story "Excalibur and the Atom", I got an urge to read more on old English legends. I'm interested in the book Sturgeon took the quotations from. If there is any way you can get the name of it, I'd appreciate it loads if you'd send it to me.

I've been reading "SF" for a good long time, and this was the first story that ever really impressed me. Please keep printing that way. If you would grant my request, I will be a fan for life. Which I nearly am now.

Denise Downey
825 East 14th Street
Brooklyn, New York

We checked with Ted Sturgeon. He tells us he is so fascinated with the story of Excalibur, that he feels the specific type of book from which he quoted should be written. So he's making use of it before it's been written—that's all. ..... Ed.

WHO'S NOT SCARED?

Dear Sir:

In your August issue you very thoroughly took apart the recent RKO fantasy, "The Thing," bringing out both its good and very few bad points.

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However, on the point of suspense, you and I disagree. I have no doubt, that you are better qualified to judge, but I dare you to canvass any ten ordinary fantasy fans. I think the majority will say heartily that the suspense increased *after* the thing was revealed.

Of course, while the thing was packed in that cake of ice, everybody shivered a little but, after it got away and began running around outside, my dear sir, the audience almost had a heart attack every time a door was opened.

And the suspense kept building up to a climax that brought cold sweat. It was certainly no picture to think about on a cold and dark night.

Well, no hard feelings. Just wanted to see that poor "thing" get justice. And congrats on a real fine old-time issue!

With kindest regards,

James Davis
2003 Whitis Avenue
Austin, Texas

Sure, Jim, there was suspense in "The Thing"—but in our opinion it was all before the audience met the monster, while they had the terrifying feeling of what he might be, and might look like. What we argue about the monster was that he was no more horrifying—and in many instances less so—than the monsters in the old-time horror movies. Our cry is that, by and large, "The Thing" had nothing new to offer an audience who had been exposed to this type of entertainment before.

We feel that the type of creature the thing was—a vegetable who lived on human blood—the way humans live on vegetables—was an excellent twist. One of the points we didn't like was the way he resembled Frankenstein and Dracula, instead of being an entirely original-looking entity. Ed.

HOW ABOUT VENUSIAN SLANG?

Dear LES:

You can blame yourself. Printing my letter in the August FA has inspired me to write my second letter to you, though I have written a few cards. I will kill the first fan who says I should be Lynch-ed.

The cover was good. No masterpiece, but I liked it.

You were right when you said you'd receive tons of abuse for your opinions on "The Thing". Consider yourself abused. I thought it a very good movie.

Sturgeon's novelet was very interesting once you get past the Sam Shovel routine of the first five or six pages. After that it picked up somewhat, and was first by a whisker. "With This Ring" almost beat it, though. Very cute. The rest rank as follows:

(3) "Everybody Loves Irving Bommer"
(4) "The Man with the Clutching Hand"
(5) "Very Cold for Conquest"
(6) "The Spoilers of Lern"

Perhaps I'm being a bit unfair to Costello. The idea was good, the writing fair, but why in (naughty word) were the Venusians talking in American slang?????

As I said in last month's card, I intend to fight for the revival of the pic awards (hardly a revival since, as far as I know, none were given out). Anyhow, if the awards are back, I vote for Calvin Thos. Beck.

James Lynch
2630 Penn Avenue, North
Minneapolis, Minnesota

At this time, it's most impractical for us to have an award each month for the "best" letter. As soon as we are able to, this is one of the things we will put into practice. ..... Ed.

COUNTRY-COP SCIENCE-FICTION FAN

Dear Ed:

I feel at last I must write to a magazine (my first time) as I have just finished reading a batch of science fiction sent me by a friend a little nearer civilization than I am.

Congratulations for some fine stories in F. A. and A. S. I will not try to enumerate them because I enjoyed them all. Over here I can't be too fussy about the stories I manage to get hold of, as a country cop like myself has considerable trouble acquiring any American mags. Just my luck that I prefer Science Fiction, which is scarcer than most. But I mustn't groan.

My point in writing is to agree with Brian McNaughton of N. J. in your year-old mag which has just reached me. I believe that 80% or even a higher percentage of SF fans are also 'horror' fans. I know I enjoy reading a 'Ghoulish' story just as much as a 100-lights-per-sec yarn.

Best wishes for more and, if possible, better issues.

Constable G. Piddock
Ballymadigan, Castlerock, 60 Derry
North Ireland, Great Britain

WONDERFUL MAGAZINE!

Dear Editor:

My only comments are as follows: FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is a wonderful magazine, well published and pleasantly easy to read. I especially enjoy the feature items and of course the novels and shorts. The July issue was exceptionally well rounded. Thank you for the privilege of being able to purchase such pleasant entertainment. "The Dead Don't Die" was a real thriller.

Bob Lackey
4801 Cadillac Avenue
Detroit 13, Michigan

Those are mighty fine words to hear, Bob. We'll do our best to keep the stories

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and fillers up to the standards you enjoy. ..... Ed.

HOW MUCH DO WE KNOW OF MAN?

Sir:

Whenever I have the chance—I should call it lucky chance—to enter in possession of any number of Fantastic Adventures or Amazing Stories or *Future*, or *Astounding*, or *Galaxy*, I read first of all the Editor's Page, then all the stories, then the Reader's Page. I always find in them all something that makes me proud to be able to read English, even if some time it is a bit difficult for me to understand some special words as parsec—hyperdrive—subdrive—1, 2, 3, or 4 degree dimensions (although I seem to understand that we all live in the three-degree one), etc., etc.

Anyhow, this is not the point. Yesterday, Saturday, I was lucky enough to get the June and July editions of FA. I read both shorts—"Conditioned Reflex" by Bill McGivern and "Witness for the Defense" by Paul Fairman. I like them both. But coming at the philosophical viewpoint of the shorts, I should like to state my view.

I have read Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason". As far as I remember, here is what he says— "We cannot know the world in its absolute reality (the thing in itself) but only as it appears to us. So, in its phenomena, in the empirical world in which the reality is transformed by principles and by the laws of our own reasonings. Space and time, for example, do not exist, if they are not principles or pure intuitions of reason. So the pure esteems of quality, quantity, relation and modality, that in the empirical world are of absolute value.

Elsewhere, Kant says, "The moral action is the one that happens in conformity with another principle of reason, the categorical imperative". That compels us to do our every action so that it could (or should) serve as example for every other human being; otherwise the action is immoral.

It was impossible for me, however, to understand why the human being seems to obey the categorical imperative, as it was impossible for me to understand the thing in itself!

I stopped for a while to read once more both books. But if, in "Conditioned Reflex" the man, the materialist man, takes no notice whatever of God, how, in itself, could Bargy, Franky, and Soft Joe take notice of a mere shadow? Do we come to the knowledge that God does not exist and that, if God does exist, we have still a long time left to plunder before we are called to the "Judgment"?

Is this the mad reasoning of man, or the mad man reasoning? Could your readers enlighten me?

If this senseless letter of mine is lucky enough to see print and I am lucky enough to get FA's next edition, the first thing I am going to look for is the "Reader's Page".

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I can say with Miss Alice Bullock on page 124 (July issue), "Short stories please me more than novelettes and (a big) THANKS (to you) to all the gods of the galaxies you don't run serials." It would be impossible for me to get all the copies in which the serials are printed. I must be content with what I get now and then. I am not a lucky American.

Dan Crosta (Italian Immigrant, S. Africa)
101, Chester House, 132, Jeppe Street
Johannesburg, South Africa

NO NAME

Dear Editor:

The July FANTASTIC finally caught up with me. This is a third point in the "Conditioned Reflex—Witness for the Defense" matter.

The whole plan behind all life is growth, evolution and a march towards perfection. All the universe is one planned installation of which only a very small dimension is yet known to us. Every life of every person is just one day at school. And the gross of humanity is still way back in grammar school and kindergarten.

At certain periods there are periodic checks in which the unsuitable units are weeded out and sent back for rework. We had two such in the past and the third one is just coming up in the next war. This time almost one-third will be checked out, as the rest is already so far advanced that the final development and growth has to take place in an undisturbed straight line. Unhampered by those who either cannot or will not make the grade and insist on running wild at their pleasure.

The next war will start in 1960 and will initiate a revolution which will last five years. As soon as the first phase is over, extra-terrestrial help will appear in certain oases already set aside where the seeds of the next civilization will be started.

The question is not whether mankind is good or bad, it is neither. Part of it is bad in relation to the rest, and will be excised. The majority is good enough to pass on and will be preserved and led on to real glory and knowledge.

The cosmos is full of sentient life. Naturally, with all the secrets of nature at the disposal of advanced races, destructiveness and typical rambunctious adolescent gall has no place in it. That's why we have been given the means to burn out our cancerous growths and wild flesh, but not enough knowledge to escape into space or even smash this planet. And some alien forces have been implanted to act like maggots in an ulcerated wound, cleansing it by consuming the infected tissue.

Frederick H. Hehr
1447-D Stanford
Santa Monica, California

Well, this makes four different ideas so far on mankind, his progress or his retrogression. Personally, we're inclined to agree with Mr. Fairman in his optimistic outlook. The world will not necessarily end in chaos, there is hope for humanity. Man is basically good, and striving always toward growth. Sure, he makes mistakes—terrible, tragic mistakes—but always he learns, climbs higher. Perhaps he falls back one step for every two he moves up—but he's still one step ahead each time.

That's our opinion. What's yours? ... Ed.

FIRST LETTER

Dear Editor:

I have been reading your magazine since I was 14, about two and a half years, and this is my first letter. I am not writing this letter to tell you how shocked I am at your covers, stories, authors, illustrators, inside art, or whatever else you can think of. I am writing only to give my opinions, which you say you welcome.

Your August issue I thought was good. I rated the stories in the following order: (first) "Excalibur and the Atom", (second) "Very Cold for Conquest", (third) "With This Ring" and "The Spoilers of Lern", (fourth) "Everybody Loves Irving Bommer", and (fifth) "The Man with the Clutching Hand" which I didn't think much of.

I wish you would print some more stories along the line of "The Masters of Sleep" by Hubbard, "Mistress of the Djinn" by St. Reynard, "The Sword of Ra" by St. Reynard, and "When the World Tottered" by del Rey. "Excalibur and the Atom" was also of that type.

Now for my opinion of your covers. If your covers were solid black or if they had a chart of the human anatomy on them, I would buy the magazine if the stories were good, which they always are. I do not buy the magazine for its cover as some of your readers must; I buy for the stories.

I believe that you and your staff are capable of putting good or at least fair covers on the magazine. Some insist on saying you put nude women on your covers, but so far I haven't seen one that had essential articles of clothing missing. I think your magazines are the best on the market of their type, and that this means they must have a good editor and staff.

Oh yes, why don't you put your address where it can be seen by anyone wanting to write?

George Carr, Jr.
2430 Britton Avenue
Dallas 16, Texas

In our stories and in our covers, we attempt to use a range of subject matter that will appeal to as many of our readers as possible. We certainly don't believe that

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any of our covers are of the "indecent" variety—and hope none of our readers read into the covers what really isn't there.

The lead story in this issue, ("Medusa Was A Lady" by William Tenn), stacks right up there with the kind of story you request. How do you like it? ..... Ed.

BEST STORY OF ALL

Dear Editor:

I have been reading FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and your sister magazine AMAZING STORIES for eleven years and just had to write and tell you that "Excalibur and the Atom" by Theodore Sturgeon was one of the best stories I have read in my years of reading your magazine.

I would appreciate it very much if you could print that I have a few books I'd like to sell at a very reasonable price. They are as follows: by H. Rider Haggard, "Red Eve"; "She and Allen"; "The Wizard"; "Queen of the Dawn".

I will answer all letters and cards.

Mrs. William Cloer
8 Elizabeth Ct.
Poquonnock Bridge, Conn.

FANZINES—A NEW ARTIST

Dear Editor:

First of all let me congratulate Robert Gibson Jones for his magnificent cover on the August FA. What color! What composition! So what if it doesn't follow the story's description? It's one of the best Jones covers I've seen.

"Excalibur and the Atom", although not the greatest story ever to appear in FA, was the best story in the magazine. However, I believe the ending was a little weak; the philosophy I mean. Without so much emphasis on it, Mr. Sturgeon would surely have had a better story.

As for the remainder of the stories, I can't say that any one of them is much better than any other one. They may be a little better than usual, though. I believe you print better fantasy stories than most magazines. There is not too much fairy tale appearance to them, and there isn't any of the formal story-telling I've read in some other fantasy mags.

As for the interior illos, they were fairly good. Dorset's work wasn't too bad. The first Finlay illo wasn't quite what I'd expect from him, though. His second one was much better. The one by Sharp seemed up to par, and Barry's wasn't bad either. Lawrence's illustration seemed worth the effort, although I've seen better ones by him.

Well, this makes two letters in two years. Now I think I'll be more regular in sending missives to FA.

Any fanzine wanting an artist to do pen-and-ink illos can contact me. I think

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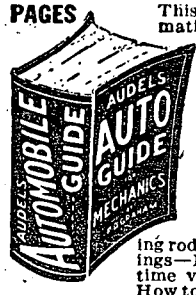

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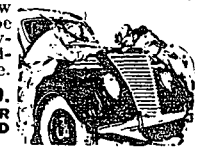

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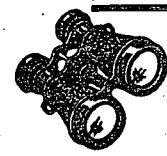

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it's about time I started drawing for stf publications.

Harold Hostetler
Box 163
Cairnbrook, Pa.

We hope you will be more regular in sending your letters to us, Harold. All comments, compliments, and criticisms, are always welcome. ..... Ed.

FINLAY LEADS THE LINE!

Dear LES:

C. L. Disbrow is *my* pet peeve. Finlay is not my favorite artist, and Disbrow has the right to dislike him if he so chooses, but C. L. made one derogatory remark I must take action against. Quote "...with the aim of relegating Finlay to the lower class S-F mags from whence he came." Unquote.

FA and AS are extremely lucky to have Virgil on their staff of artists. Finlay is *the* leading *fantasy* illustrator of Today. He ranks with my favorite illustrator, J. Allen St. John, as one of the few fantasy artists to achieve recognition as a book illustrator.

I remember when a new artist appeared in WEIRD TALES. He signed his pics "Virgil"; later on AS got him, and so did FN and FFM. Even during World War II, Cpl. Virgil Finlay kept turning out works of art for our favorite mags.

All I can say is that I hope Disbrow will be relegated to the lower depths from which he emerged unbidden.

So much for Disbrow.

Lovely cover, isn't it?

Y'know, I disagree with that guy. The sex in NNW was refreshing. As to that subject, get offut, jr.

As for the stories, "Excalibur" was tops, and I hope to see more of Dorset. "Ring" was stereotype ("hack" to the ignorant). "Spoilers" and "Irving Bommer" I've not yet read. The shorts by Fairman and Costello were very good.

I would like to contact Burroughsians around here.

Also: I have a helluva large collection of stf books, mags, comics, pocket books, etc., for trade. I will trade. I will trade for Burroughs, mags, big little books, in fact anything at all by Burroughs (almost), also for "Bride of Frankenstein", "Dracula's Guest", "F. P. 1 Does Not Reply", and other stuff like that there. Send your want and trade lists to me.

Stfectionatelyours.

Eldon K. Everett
Post Office Box 513
Tacoma, Washington

AND FINLAY AGAIN...

Dear Editor:

I read in the August issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, a letter by some man (or woman?) named C. L. Disbrow. He objects very strongly to the use of Virgil Finlay pictures. He should realize some people must like them, including ye Ed, or they would not appear in FA. I like VF's pictures, as they lend a light to the stories they illustrate. I think when Mr. Finlay illustrates fantasy, he does an excellent job. Finlay has done an excellent job when he illustrated some of A. Merritt's stories. He has had several masterpieces in FA, too.

R. G. Jones has a way with your covers. Keep him by all means. Also Henry Sharp and Rod Ruth.

Your present policy of mixing stf with fantasy is enjoyable. Please continue this policy.

And please, please—*longer novels.*

And get Charles Recour!

Continue the good work.

David A. Bates
R. F. D. No. 1
Claremont, New Hampshire

Charlie Recour has gone back to school for another year or so, and has been doing no writing since he went back. However, he promises faithfully that the first chance he gets—and the first story he writes—will be for us.

We're planning a few longer novels in the future—so you'll get your wish at the earliest opportunity. How's that for anticipating your desires? ..... Ed.

BACK ISSUES FOR SALE

Dear Editor:

This is my first letter to you after being a reader for many years, and a very satisfied one too. My favorites are stories along the miracle line, real fantasy, of which we get so little.

My reason for this letter is that so many readers (a lot of beginners to fantasy) ask if there is any way to get back issues of various fantasy and science-fiction mags. Well, since I have quite a few old issues and I know what it is to get bitten by the fantasy bug, I am willing to help out with some of my collection.

I have 215 back issues of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, AMAZING STORIES, FAMOUS FANTASTIC, and many others. Will let the whole lot go for best offer, or nine (9c) cents each. All are in excellent condition and all different. With best offer I will include as a gift two old issues of AMAZING STORIES (1928). Also 7 books.

Will you please print this letter in the Reader's Page, as I would like to dispose of them to someone who would appreciate our kind of reading. Magazines go back to 1944.

Edward Gentry
901 Perry Street
Richmond 24, Virginia

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MATHEMATICS

a la Mode

By LEE OWENS

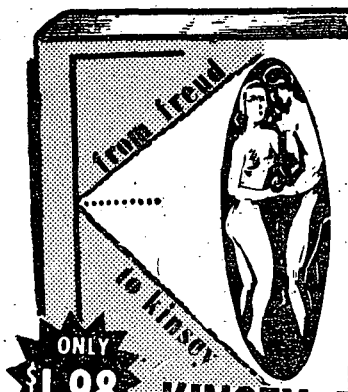
EVEN THOUGH A hundred excellent popularizations assure people that mathematics is as easy to learn as pie-eating, a large number still retain a fear of the subject comparable to the inherent fear of spiders or reptiles! Nevertheless, this attitude is waning slowly, partially because our modern age demands a knowledge of math, and partially because so many superb teachers have led people to the mathematical wine-cellar—and they've found its contents good.

A person picks up a technical book, sees it filled with all sorts of curly-cue symbols, the letters of a dozen alphabets including Hebrew, Greek, English and German, sees complicated-looking curves and concludes "This ain't for me!" But take that same person step by step through mathematical reasoning and he follows it perfectly. What causes this paradox?

The difficulty is common to any unfamiliar idea. First you've got to learn the basic language of a subject. A "carburetor" holds no terrors for anyone who knows what a carburetor is. When terms are defined everything becomes easy. Consider, for example, some frequently encountered mathematical terms. Take "differential equations"; this is a mouth-filling phrase, but what it means is so simple that anyone can grasp it instantly. It refers to an ordinary algebraic equation of the variety "Y equals five X times B" except that one of the quantities "X, or Y or B" is a rate, say like "Z miles per hour." There is nothing involved about that! Yet a person will shy away from a differential equation as if it were a striking snake; and paradoxically enough, he will be attracted to it because he wants to know how a rocket operates and realizes that he can't really understand it until he knows the differential equations which describe its operations so elegantly and economically!

You could select a hundred similar examples from mathematics; those "S-shaped" symbols which make expressions look so complicated are just warning signs indicating a form of addition. Call them "integral signs" instead of addition signs and your student shudders.

Fortunately, more and more, people are taking to mathematical language, acquiring its vocabulary and grammar, and discovering for themselves that it's no more difficult than learning to count. Above all, they're finding what a new vista in understanding it opens to them. *Mathematica vincit omnia!*



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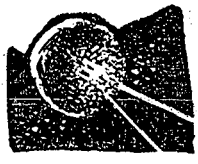
THE USE of tracers, solutions of radioactive materials injected in plants or animals, to locate or deal with diseased organs, is becoming a well standardized technique. Recently a national weekly reported on an ingenious extension of this idea which appears likely to set the pattern of operations of this sort for the future—particularly those dealing with cancerous and tumorous growths.

The particular victim was a woman suffering from a severe brain cancer which had affected her mind. Experimentally it was found that solutions of certain barium salts injected into her bloodstream would carry right to the cancerous tissues in her head. This suggested a direct neutron attack.

The woman was placed in a shielded reactor at one of the large atomic labs and her head was exposed to a confined stream of powerful neutrons. The neutrons excited the individual atoms of barium isolated in the cancerous tissues and induced what might be called a series of minute atomic explosions, with their release of gamma rays, etc., right in the midst of the cancerous material! This amazing experiment seems to have pretty well succeeded and the woman has a new lease on life. Naturally it is not to be assumed that this is an automatic cure—so far it is purely experimental—but it does seem to offer great things for the future.

Jack Winter

Waves That Bounce on the Moon



By DALE LORD

EVER SINCE Army engineers, a few years ago, succeeded in plinking radar waves off the Moon, radio and radar exploration of the sky has gone on at a furious pace. Modified transmitters and, above all, receivers have been scouring the skies for information—and getting it! Mostly this has been a matter of gathering strange radio and radar impulses from space and from the stars. Sensitive receivers pick it up, select the desired frequencies, and record them. The transmitting aspects have had to do only with the moon.

Australian scientists are conducting tests

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however, designed to discern the nature of the Moon's surface as a reflector of radio waves. Using radio waves of varying frequencies up into the radar range, they've been sending out blasts from an ordinary fixed antenna with a good deal of power, and the reflected, delayed waves from both the ionosphere and the Moon's surface proper have been picked up.

A definite Doppler effect, a shifting of frequency, could be detected, leading to the belief that the surface is what is called a "rough" reflector. More sensitive equipment will readily determine details of the surface aspects of the miniature planet.

The potential value of this knowledge lies in its eventual use. Someday the Moon will be a relay station. Someday the knowledge of the behavior of waves in space will be of paramount importance. The information we have now will be more than useful then, particularly as a measure of the power required, and the clarity of space transmissions. Intra-space radio and radar is, in a sense, an accomplished fact. All that remains is to get the transmitters and receivers into action!

IN PERFECT HEALTH

By A. T. KEDZIE

WITH ALL the strides being made in medicine today it's practically a sure fact that in the world of the future man will be in a state of 100 per cent physical perfection.

The latest discovery is that drugs which prevent blood-clotting can save the limbs of victims of severe frost-bite.

Not long ago, in Chicago, a man slept for eight hours outside in ten-degree cold weather. He was unconscious, under the influence of liquor, and both his blood pressure and temperature were too low to register on available instruments.

The patient was given the anticoagulating dicumarol and heparin in addition to conventional treatment, and eight months later was discharged from the hospital—his only sign of battle the amputation of one finger.

According to doctors who worked over him, without the anticoagulating drugs the patient would have suffered the loss of both hands and feet, which would have become gangrenous.

Earlier experiments with these drugs showed that anticoagulants in acute frost-bite prevent blood clots in the interspace of tissue. These clots cause gangrene or a death of the tissue for which there is no known treatent.

The technological and scientific strides that are constantly being made give promise that the world of tomorrow will be one wonderful place to live in! Perhaps immortality is not as impossible to achieve as we now think.

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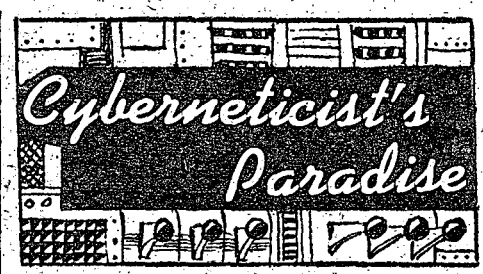

THE COMING and inevitable dream of cybernetics—that machines will do all of the world's work—mental and physical—is really with us. It is not vague and shadowy—it is real and actual. Slowly and haltingly, the machines and processes of cybernetics have an encouraging—and to some a terrifying—reality. Everyone is familiar with the robotic British factory which produces radios with hardly any human intervention, and on a smaller scale many other examples could be given.

You have to turn to some very prosaic industries to see where the principles and practices of cybernetics have really taken hold. In modern steel mills and rolling mills, for example, machines do everything but address the orders—and maybe they do that. But the most superb example of cyberneticism and a crowning confirmation of the rule of the robots, is a factory which for twenty or thirty years has been manufacturing most of the automobile frames for the auto industry! You'd hardly expect this—Detroit, the very heart of automaticity, has gladly surrendered the manufacture of this automotive component to this particular manufacturer who has literally set up a factory without "hands."

Forty per cent of all the automobile frames made in this country roll from this two-block-long temple of machines—with only seventy-five pairs of human hands in the plant! This is not fantasy—rather it is an unhappy (or perhaps hopeful) omen of the future when men will be relieved of work. Steel sheet goes into one end of the factory and finished, riveted, welded, formed automobile frames roll out the other with hardly so much as the touch of a human hand. It is push-button production carried to the ultimate!

To those without imagination, this might seem like the routine report of an industrial process—and how wrong they would be! Anyone touched by the stimulating visions of science-fiction instantly recognizes that this is a harbinger and portent of the future of the world (provided atomics don't ruin it!). The world is molded in the drafting room, the foundry and the machine-shops according to the visions of the research labs. If you want to see what will change the future of Man, run down to the nearest machine tool plant and watch an automatic machine chew its way into a block of metal guided only by steel, electrical and hydraulic nerves and muscles. Even the buttons will be pushed by buttons!

L. A. Burt

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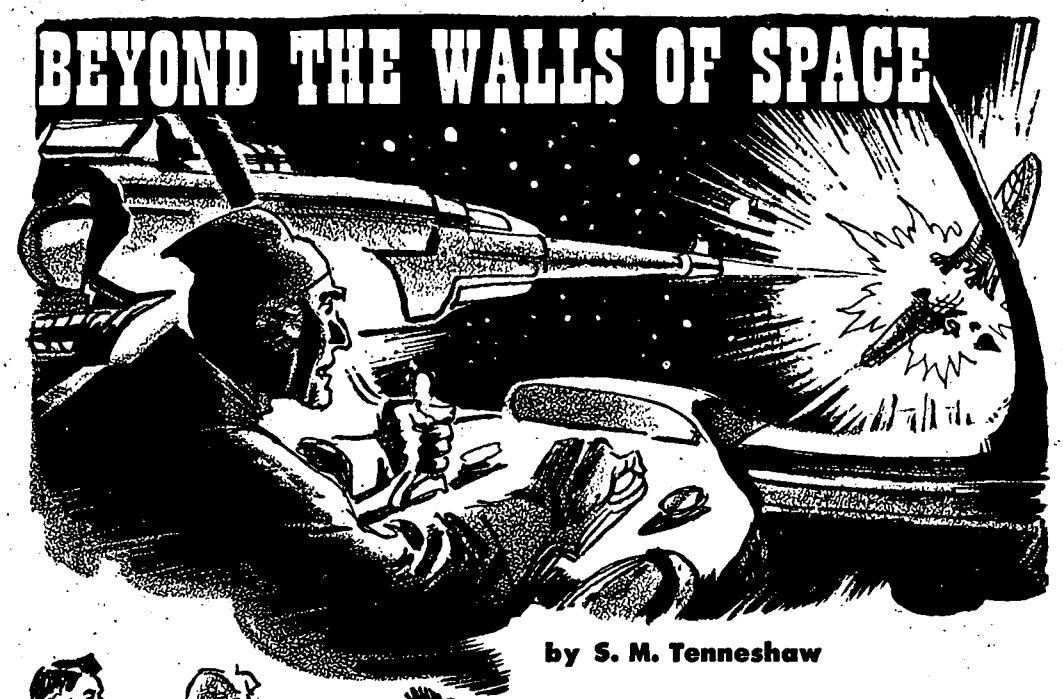

by S. M. Tenneshaw

Is space actually a limitless void? Is our solar system an escape-proof prison? Three bold adventurers sought to learn the truth. What incredible discovery did they make?

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by Rog Phillips

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